DOING LIFE TOGETHER BOOT CAMP: A DISCIPLING MODEL FOR CULTURAL CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

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by
Stephen Goldsmith
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Journey of Faith Methodist Church is the context in Houston, Texas. A nine-year-old merger with a sixty-eight-year history that relocated multiple times since 2004 until settling in Humble, Texas. The doctoral project proposes a synergy that requires a need to develop a discipleship plan inviting participants to engage in a discipleship pathway. The research project was qualitative, and the instruments consisted of pre- and post-discipleship fitness survey questionnaires, journaling, and post-interview questions. My presupposition embodies a curiosity about how radical the culture of our context would change when the laity commits to accountable spiritual formation.

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Thirdly, I want to acknowledge my parents, Rev. Robert L. Goldsmith and Missionary Phyllis M. Goldsmith, and my Mom-in-Love, Ms. JoAnn Stewart for all your

prayers and support through the years. You all remain a continued source of inspiration for me to keep moving forward. I am grateful for the staff and faculty of the United Theological Seminary, and most importantly, I am honored to have been mentored by two of God's leading homileticians, pastors, and distinguished leaders of the twenty-first century in the Rev. Dr. Lance Watson and Rev. Dr. William Curtis. It gives me great privilege to rise forth out of this program as a Watson-Curtis Fellow.

Additionally, I thank those mentors who impacted my life not only during this doctoral journey, but through the years including, Bishop Dr. Robert Hayes, Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell, Rev. Dr. Robert Childress, and all my colleagues in labor. Thank you for the impressions that you have made on my life. To my immediate peers that I had the fortunate opportunity to join on our first day of this program the Rev. Adrain Davis, Rev. Richard Boone, Rev. Georges Fleurimond, and Rev. Justin Hunt. I am forever grateful that God orchestrated our paths to converge in the Fall of 2022. We weathered the storms and persevered over all the challenges, most of all we encouraged and held each other accountable the whole way. I cannot forget the wider Watson-Curtis cohort that has extended your prayers, support, and encouragement. Keep pressing because you are next!

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Finally, I want to thank the constituency of Journey of Faith Church Humble, for all your prayers, patience, and support through these last three years of my eight-year tenure as the lead pastor. You have challenged me to be sharper in my ministerial approach, and I have matured spiritually as a result of the relationship that we forged through the years. I am forever grateful to you and those who participated in the "Doing Life Together Boot Camp." Thank you for trusting and walking with me through this seminar. Your participation and feedback are invaluable.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wonderful wife, Rev. Deneen V. R. Goldsmith, MDiv, MBA, and our children, Seth Paul, and Disney Victoria-Elle for your undaunted prayers, love, and support. I also dedicate this project to my parents, Rev. Robert and Phyllis Goldsmith, who raised me in the church, and modeled what it means to seek God first in my life. Thank you for all of the sacrifices that you made for me and my siblings. This project is also dedicated to the greatest Mom-in-Love ever, Ms. JoAnn Stewart, and the sainted memory of my Father-in-Love, Rev. Paul Stewart who went to glory eleven years ago. Finally, I dedicate this work to my siblings and all of my extended family and friends. Love you all to life!

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 caused a global shift in the church, and as a result, churches around the world are continually experiencing the effects of the believer's priorities where their spiritual formation is concerned. A regression in committed participation in the life of the local church was likely accelerated by the pandemic, and leaders have struggled with how to reel the laity back into higher levels of commitment and prioritization of the Kingdom mandate. Thus, it needs to be said that it is time for the church to turn back to intentional discipleship as the foundation for transformation to reclaim laity into higher levels of commitment. Such transformative discipleship must encompass the individual's total life, as noted by Rev. Kirbyjon H. Caldwell in Nile Harper's book, *Urban Churches, Vital Signs: Beyond Charity Towards Justice*, as Caldwell states,

> The key to transformation is understanding the Kingdom of God as a comprehensive vision that includes all aspects of human life. Biblical spirituality is not limited to the inner spiritual world. True spirituality is inclusive of people's everyday social, physical, material, and religious well-being. Moreover, Caldwell says, "From a theological point of view we believe God is just as concerned about the salvation of the whole community as about the salvation of the individual. Anyone who seeks to separate the two has failed to understand the ethos of the Old Testament and the teaching of Jesus Christ as seen in the New Testament…The church believes that it is called to be a living incarnation of the gospel active in the world."[1]

The objective of the "Doing Life Together (DLT) Boot Camp," is to reclaim the leadership and laity of Journey of Faith Church Humble to birth such transformation

[1] Nile Harper, *Urban Churches, Vital Signs: Beyond Charity Towards Justice* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 223.

within the local church and the community by addressing the everyday social, physical, material, and religious well-being of its participants. Basic Combat Training (or Boot Camp as is commonly known) is required of all newly enlisted soldiers to create a strong foundation for their military experience and future goals. The goal is threefold: to build you up, help you discover your inner strength, and equip you to succeed in life. It is challenging and designed to push each soldier to become the best version of themselves mentally and physically.[2] As soldiers of God's Army, our call is not much different.

For this reason, the DLT Boot Camp was designed to invite disciples of Jesus Christ on every level into an intense six-week fellowship, bonding, and training exercise that will lead to a cycle of active pursuit into deeper spiritual formation. The foundations of this disciple-making intensive for servant leadership in the ministry context are grounded biblically, historically, theologically, and even across the interdisciplinary foundation. Beyond such foundations, it necessitates theoretical underpinnings juxtaposed with scripture, church history, and systematic theology.

The ultimate goal of the research is to use change culture to facilitate a discipleship culture at Journey of Faith. Therefore, this document exists to invite the secular voices of the professionals and curators across the vocation of change culture to conversate with the voices of theological scholarship to inform the ministry context. Christian discipleship at Journey of Faith is hampered or hindered because ministry leaders have not effectively provided discipleship opportunities to the membership.

If Christians lack effective Christian discipleship, they are less likely to properly disciple others and participate in other discipleship opportunities throughout the church.

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[2] U. S. Army, "Basic Training," GoArmy.com, https://www.goarmy.com/army-life/basic-training.html.

Thus, the project, "Doing Life Together (DLT) Boot Camp," grew out of a synergistic opportunity that arises out of the ministry context and the researcher's spiritual journey. As such, it revealed a desire to develop an effective disciple-making model that will provide growth opportunities for servant leaders as they acquire methodologies to create and promote opportunities for Christian discipleship to the membership that will reshape the culture of the ministry context.

Chapter two reflects the relevance of the biblical text to the project. The research was guided by the simplicity and profundity of the passage which provides significant details regarding the actions that Jesus takes to secure and replicate his disciples. In that, prioritizing active participation in Christian discipleship is treated as an option juxtapose the obligation of the servant leader at Journey of Faith, an existential examination of the central thesis of Matthew 4:18-22 informs the recurring obligation of servant leaders by highlighting the motif of Jesus' model for replicating disciples who will follow him across four actions. The actions of Jesus were to travel to search for them, look around to identify them, extends an urgent invitation to them, and repeats the first three actions by demonstrating them for his disciples. As the narrative concludes, Jesus fully engaged in his mission to replicate disciples as he makes his journey towards the cross for his final victory.

Chapter Three grants a peak at the journeys of John Wesley and his brother Charles who managed to revolutionize the Christian world through their passion and desire to live and extend an invitation to others to live a life grounded in holiness. The effectiveness of Wesley's 'Holy Club at Oxford' served as the precursor to the formation of widespread Wesleyan societies producing two additional small group models called,

Class Meetings and Band Meetings that are hallmarks to Methodism. These ingenious models were developed to create a smaller gathering to encourage more intimate sharing and accountability. Moreover, a close examination of John and Charles Wesley's journey was necessary to the foundation of the doctoral project; considering Journey of Faith is a Global Methodist Church. Therefore, the project offers leaders an opportunity to lean into the halls of history and glean from some of the most significant events that snowballed into the Methodist Movement.

Chapter Four focuses on the theological foundation of the research. Seemingly, twenty-first century culture is gaining more and more influence with today's generations, and the church bears the responsibility to implement a swift apologetic response less the theological framework of social media culture and other phenomena that continue to improperly shape our cosmos. Respected scholar, C. S. Lewis makes a claim for Christianity in his book, *Mere Christianity*, saying, "The Christian way is different: harder, and easier. Christ says, 'Give me All. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You."[3] Hence, the doctoral project was grounded within the premise of a theological framework informing the pathway to Jesus Christ's core invitation for an ongoing relationship with him.

Chapter Five, the interdisciplinary research approached the project at the intersection of what it means to be/become a disciple of Jesus Christ theoretically filtered through Lewin's Change Theory (LCT) which is a three-stage model used to facilitate cultural change. LCT is typically expressed through the concept of unfreeze, change, and refreeze. In Steve Gladen's guide, *Planning Small Groups with Purpose,* Rick Warren the

[3] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1952), 196.

founding pastor of the Saddleback Valley Community Church holds, "Kay and I started…a small group that met in the living room of our rented apartment, and [over forty years later]…there are over 7,000 small groups in ministry…through the intimate fellowship in our small groups that connects people to each other at the heart level."[4]

Thus, the goal of the project was to unfreeze the current mentality of the ministry context to implement a Christ-centered priority (Matt. 4:18-22) for spiritual growth that equips and encourages each group to reach the next disciple(s) for Jesus Christ. The interdisciplinary dialogue across the project problem, biblical, historical, and theological foundations properly confer with Lewin's Change Theory and the goal to facilitate a fire-filled discipling movement one group at a time. For this reason, the project proposal is guided by a synergistic opportunity between disciple-making and Lewin's Change Theory to strike the match that will employ a discipling culture igniting a revival-fire for souls.

[4] Steve Gladen, *Planning Small Groups with Purpose: A Field-Tested Guide To Design and Grow Your Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018), 15.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

I am humbled by the sheer opportunity to share life's journey with a host of family and friends, even while serving as the Lead Pastor of Journey of Faith Methodist Church (JOF) in Humble, Texas, which is in the northeast metroplex of Houston, Texas. As a child, I observed my father serve as a bi-vocational pastor, because he has pastored Greater New Jerusalem Church of God in Christ for forty-four years plus, and he retired after a thirty-year career on the assembly lines of the automotive giant Diamler-Chrysler. Moreover, my mother retired after a thirty-year career as an administrative assistant from Prairie State Legal Services Law Firm, while also serving in additional roles through the years as the first lady, evangelist, minister of music, and organist for our church.

After a couple of years of majoring in court reporting at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio, my mother dropped out of college and married my father on August 13, 1977, with the plan to go back and finish college after relocating to Rockford, Illinois from Cleveland, Ohio where she grew up. Needless to say, they started a family, and Mom never went back to school. Nevertheless, she and my father made many sacrifices over the years and instilled a work ethic in me that has manifested in all my commitments. Moreover, I have fought for, and felt a responsibility and a pressure to excel, conquer, and achieve my goals and my purpose to maximize the sacrifices my

parents have made to ensure that we had better opportunities to obtain a great education and quality of life.

As a child, I was a tender-hearted kid who would share my very last with others. I never liked bullies or seeing people mistreated, and I always stood up for others who were being bullied or marginalized. Coincidentally, I have never been, and I am still not one to initiate confrontation. Nevertheless, something in me rises when I am a witness to injustice on innocent or marginalized persons. I always wrestled with confrontation/conflict, as it pertains to being the initiator, whether within my right to address a problem or not within my right. On a deeper level, I always preferred to find more diplomatic courses of action that minimize the conflict in any given situation, largely because I want everyone to get along.

Perhaps at the core, it is because I always wrestled internally with an unspoken anxiety about conflicting with others. I never understood the unspoken anxiety related to conflict, and yet God called me to pastor. None of this is to say that I cannot be confrontational. Rather, I affirm that somewhere along the line God's been trying to push me out of the comforts of always being diplomatic to make others feel good at my expense. Thus, he called me to pastoring and preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ which unapologetically confronts sin and the evils of this world.

However, as I reflect on this matter, my parents taught my siblings and me to hold our peace, and to gracefully let matters go. We were taught to pray and take the pathway of humility, and for this reason, I cannot say with confidence that I ever really learned as a child how to properly handle what author Nate Regier in his book calls, *Conflict Without Casualties.* Regier says, "Compassion is not for the faint at heart. True

compassion, the kind that allows conflict in order to create, is much more than empathy or caring, much more than going out of your way to help others…Compassion doesn't mean letting someone off the hook, feeling sorry for them, or "loving them into good behavior." Compassionate accountability is the process of holding someone (including yourself) accountable while preserving their dignity.[1] That is to say that confrontation can be modeled as compassionate accountability when employed properly. Therefore, after much prayer and discernment over the years, I have determined that compassionate accountability is one component of my ministry that God has called me to lead and implement in my ministry context. Compassionate accountability is necessary within the context of Journey of Faith, in that such an approach centers on the heart of discipleship and their need for spiritual formation through accountability that promotes and nurtures a context full of creativity and productivity.

Speaking of productivity, I struggled with focusing for as long as I can remember, even thinking back to my childhood when my teachers called my parents because I could not stop making beats on the desk or talking to someone in class. It is problematic that my focus was most often misplaced on the things that were not priorities, and this looked much like procrastination from what I needed to focus on. At forty years old, I decided to get evaluated and discovered that I have the disorder known as ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). Resources about ADHD/ADD were limited during the time that I was growing up, and they have dramatically increased over the years.

Coincidentally, I found great solitude when focusing on music as a musician, worship leader, and choir director. By God's grace in my thirty-five years of playing, I

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[1] Nate Regier, *Conflict without Casualties: A Field Guide for Leading with Compassionate Accountability* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2017), 50.

have been blessed to tour, record, and grace the international platform as a professional musician with leading artists in the music industry including my childhood friend and sister, Michelle Williams of Destiny's Child, Fred Hammond, Donald Lawrence, Marvin Sapp, Yolanda Adams, and more. Comparably, I was heavily involved in sports including football, running track, and wrestling. As a result, I was fortunate enough to serve as team captain and acquire awards and medals over the years.

Coincidentally, within my ministry context, I am discovering more and more children, youth, and adults struggling with focusing. Whether the struggle is at home, school, work, or through social engagement, in many respects, it highlights the church's need to organize programs and resources that target this condition across the community. Far too often children are being overlooked or they fly under the radar, and they never receive proper coaching on managing their ADHD/ADD. In consideration of my childhood experience, having to force myself to develop a discipline and strategy for studying over the years with aspirations of reaching my goals, I am passionate about resourcing families and individuals in my ministry context who struggle with finding their rhythm to focus. It took me forty years to learn that my battle with focusing was not procrastination. Rather it was the fact that I have been fighting with how to isolate my distractions, and consistently focus. Thus, I affirm that it is critical to identify ADHD/ADD early to develop a strategic plan for success through intentional coaching.

Ultimately, every opportunity and accomplishment has shaped me as a leader with a strong passion for encouraging and organizing those within my ministry context around passionate worship, spiritual formation, compassion, team building, innovation, production, and discipline. Having completed my undergraduate work in Audio

Acoustics with an emphasis on recording, my background is steeped in critical attention to detail and production while building a brand. Moreover, I affirm that my Master of Divinity contextually informs my production background within the frame of the ministry context. Above all else, my duty as a husband and father anchors my desire to cultivate and empower the family throughout the ministry context of Journey of Faith Church.

Located northeast of the inner city of Houston, Texas in a small suburban town called Humble, Texas, Journey of Faith Church originated as a result of a merger between a few local United Methodist Churches including Love UMC, Mt. Corinth UMC, and Day Break UMC. On the wider frontier, Texas is the state that Journey of Faith calls home with a total population of 29,145,505.[2] The median household income is $70,957 and the average household income is $100,590 with an employment rate of 60.2% and a reported 18.0% of the total population is without health care coverage.[3] The state of Texas is the leading crude oil and natural gas producing state in the U.S.; sending more than $10 billion in production taxes to the state in fiscal year 2022, more than twice as much as in 2021, according to the state comptroller.[4]

The city of Houston is in Harris County, Southeastern Texas and boasts a county wide population of 4,788,966 (with 1,664,864 households and 1,141,227 families across the county). The median household income throughout Harris County is $68,398 and the

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[2] United States Census Bureau, "State of Texas," United States Census Bureau, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0400000US48.

[3] Houston State of Health, "2022 Demographics State: Texas," Houston State of Health, https://www.houstonstateofhealth.com/demographicdata?id=46&sectionId=936; U.S. Census Bureau, "State Texas," U.S. Census Bureau, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0400000US48.

[4] History Online, "History: Texas," History Online, https://www.history.com/topics/us-states/texas; Kyra Buckley, "Texas Collects More Than $10 Billion in Taxes From Oil and Gas Production, Comptroller Said," Houston Chronicle Online, https://www.houstonchronicle.com/business/energy/article/Texas-collects-more-than-10-billion-in-taxes-17416179.php.

average household income is $101,519 with an employment rate of 61.5%.[5] Houston is the largest city within the Harris County limits.

> It Is evident that redlining In the city of Houston and Its origins can be traced back to the conclusion of the Civil War, and still exists even today in 2022. Named after the Commander Sam Houston, the first president of the Republic of Texas, the City of Houston developed as a rail centre, with 12 railways by 1891, and has emerged as the state's leading port with industries that have and continue to contribute significantly to the expansion of Houston comprising of oil and gas, refining, high-technology, trade, business and financial services, medical research and health care, engineering services, software production, aerospace research and development operations, and so much more.[6]

Today, the city of Houston reports "a total population of 2,304,580 with the median household income being $66,333, and the average household income at $96,887."[7]

> Houston has an employment rate of 61.6% and a reported 24.5% of the total population is without health care coverage.[8] Furthermore, during the fiscal year 2021-2022 the City of Houston reported revenues of $2.6 million. The city handled $197 billion in trade by the Houston-Galveston Customs Districts, $67 billion in imports, and $130 billion in exports.[9] The ethnic makeup of the city encompasses Whites 1,147,325, Black/African American 500,344, American Indian/Alaskan Native 17,564, Asian 163,984, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 1,205, Some Other Race 389,075, and 2+ Races makeup 88,970 of the population by race. Additionally, 1,093,818 (47.38% of pop.) of the city's ethnicity is Hispanic/Latino, and 1,214,649 Non-Hispanic/Latino.[10]

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[5] Houston State of Health, "2022 Demographics," Houston State of Health, https://www.houstonstateofhealth.com/demographicdata?id=46&sectionId=936; U.S. Census Bureau: 2020 Decennial Census, "Harris County, Texas," U.S. Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/search-results.html?searchType=web&cssp=SERP &q=Harris%20 County,%20Texas.

[6] Britannica, "Houston, Texas," Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/place/Houston.

[7] Houston State of Health, "2022 Demographics," Houston State of Health, https://www.houstonstateofhealth.com/demographicdata?id=46&sectionId=936.

[8] U.S. Census Bureau, "Harris County," U.S. Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/search-results.html?searchType=web&cssp=SERP&q=Harris%20County,%20Texas.

[9] Houston, TX, "Fiscal Year 2022 Budget: Table III Citywide Expenditures Summary," Houston, TX, https://www.houstontx.gov/budget/22budadopt/I_TABIII.pdf.

[10] Houston State of Health, "2022 Demographics," Houston State of Health, https://www.houstonstateofhealth.com/demographicdata?id=2675&sectionId=936.

In the near northeast suburb of the Houston metropolitan area lies the city of Humble, whereby Journey of Faith resides specifically.

> A settler by the name of Pleasant Smith Humble, known as "Plez," arrived in the area just before the Civil War. Mr. Humble served as justice of the peace for the area, and in 1886, Pleasant Humble opened a post office in his home and the Humble name was adopted. Shallow oil production began in 1902, and by 1905, the Humble oil field was the largest producing field in Texas. The Humble Oil and Refining Company (now Exxon Co. USA) was formed by local entrepreneurs. As oil production began to decline, many land owners returned to truck farming, dairy farming, and lumbering. In 1933, the town of Humble was incorporated.[11]

Today, the city of Humble covers the 77338, 77339, 77345, 77346, and 77396 zip codes, and in 2020 the United States Census Bureau reported "a total population of 16,795 with a median household income of $53,038, and the average household income within the 77396 zip code where Journey of Faith is located is a reported $106,479."[12] "Humble has an employment rate of 66.2% and a reported 25.6% of the total population is without health care coverage."[13]

> The City of Humble by race and ethnicities White 54.2%, Black/African American 32.5%, American Indian/Alaskan Native 0%, Asian 1.0%, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 0.8%, Hispanic/Latino 43.2%, and Non-Hispanic/Latino 23.6%. The percentage of the same by race & ethnicity within the 77396 include White 45.6%, Black/African American 31.46%, American Indian/Alaskan Native 0.78%, Asian 3.73%, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 0.24%, Hispanic/Latino 45.52%, and Non-Hispanic/Latino 54.48%. The median age is 35.5 and those without health care coverage in the city of Humble make up 25.6%, with the sum of total households reported at 16,820.[14]

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[11] City of Humble, "Humble History," City of Humble, https://www.cityofhumbletx.gov/humble-history/.

[12] Houston State of Health "2022 Demographics," Houston State of Health, https://www.houstonstateofhealth.com/demographicdata?id=38671&sectionId=936.

[13] U.S. Census Bureau, "Harris County," U.S. Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/search-results.html?searchType=web&cssp=SERP&q=Harris%20County,%20Texas.

[14] Houston State of Health, "2022 Demographics of 77396," Houston State of Health, https://www.houstonstateofhealth.com/demographicdata?id=38671.

The nine-year-old congregation called Journey of Faith Methodist Church in Humble has recently disaffiliated as a local church within the Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and will be joining the Global Methodist Church on January 01, 2023. Journey of Faith is a body of Methodists who affirm their Wesleyan heritage and doctrinal dispositions centered most notably on the teachings of founders John and Charles Wesley. The United Methodist Church came to fruition on April 23, 1968, at the joining of the Methodist Church and Evangelical Brethren, across 12.5 million members of the United Methodist Church throughout 136 countries. Today, Journey of Faith shares in the amazing legacy of Methodism that John and Charles Wesley proclaimed.

Although Journey of Faith has only existed for nine years, the Journey has a much deeper history that dates back sixty-eight years to 1954. Journey of Faith became a new church plant on October 27, 2013, after the results of a merger between Love UMC and Day Break UMC. This was not the first merger that Love UMC has ever seen, considering its very first merger was formed with Mt. Corinth UMC in 2003. Between 1954-1955, Love UMC was located at 7210 Langley Road in Houston, Texas 77016, was planted on Homestead and Langley in the Scenic Woods community, a neighborhood located in northeast Houston, Texas. In its earlier days, I learned that the Scenic Woods neighborhood was predominately white, per some of the senior saints of Journey of Faith. It was practically considered the suburbs of Houston and it was a thriving neighborhood, that began to attract middle to upper-middle-class African-American residents in the late 1960s, and as these families started moving in the demographic of the neighborhood began to shift rapidly.

According to the journals of the Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Love UMC was a predominately white congregation from the time of its inception in 1954, and it stayed a predominately white congregation until circa 1969 when the demographic of the neighborhood began to shift. Rev. Hillock N. Mohler served as the first pastor from 1955-1957. In 1969, Love UMC received its first cross-cultural appointment of African American descent in the person of Rev. C. L. Adams. Prior to the merger that became Journey of Faith, Love UMC received seventeen appointed pastors, and at its height, the church grew to 500 members. However, many of the senior members from the *Love Connection* of Journey of Faith remained bitter to this day with previous leadership for organizing and selling the church building and property without notifying the congregation.

After a series of relocations over the years, Journey of Faith finally moved to their current home at 130 Atascocita Road in Humble, Texas, in 2016. Thanks to a generous grant of over $200K from an endowment needed to finish the project; construction on the $1.4M St. Andrews Ministry Center was completed by 2015, and by 2016 Journey of Faith moved into this location which sits on 5.8 acres of land. Parenthetically speaking, the constituency of Journey of Faith acquired a building that they could not afford. The grant permitted the continuation of the production. The hard reality of this matter is that the significant gap between giving, stewardship, capital campaigns, and other revenue opportunities, put the church in a position where the Annual Conference had to make some changes in leadership.

In addition to the St. Andrews Ministry Center, Journey of Faith has provided a land lease to the Harris County Department of Education — Head Start Humble site. In

2022 our team solidified a new twenty-year land lease with HCDE to expand on the campus with the launching of an “Early Head Start” program which will make space for thirty-two more children (in addition to seventy-five current spots) plus eight additional staff positions. Over twenty years, this agreement is projected to pay Journey of Faith more than $2.7M. This opportunity helps Journey of Faith solidify the revenue to pay off the $1.4M debt on the St. Andrews Ministry Center and still leaves over $1.3M to invest and create additional ministry opportunities that impacts the landscape of its mission field.

In 2017, I was appointed as the lead pastor of Journey of Faith, and during my tenure, we have established a footprint in the community as a church on the frontlines of the fight against hunger in partnership with the Houston Food Bank whereby JOF provides monthly food distributions. In addition, the church provides 100 free haircuts and hairdos annually to school-age children in partnership with the local barber school and cosmetology schools through JOF’s School R.O.CK.S. (Reaching Out Connecting Kids to Success) Back to School Festival.

While JOF provides an annual Angel Tree for the students and families of Head Start and Early Head Start, the church has also established a partnership with the Harris County Elections Office, whereby JOF serves as a regular election poll to the community. JOF also provides free meeting space with organizations such as Jack and Jill of America Inc., the Masons, Eastern Stars, North East Lake Houston Social Club, and more. Journey of Faith’s membership roll reflects a 333-member congregation that was dramatically impacted by the effects of COVID. Pre-pandemic, Journey of Faith appreciated an active participation of 255-265 members. However, the effects of the pandemic have left

Journey of Faith experiencing an active membership of roughly 160-175 parishioners in person. The pandemic took its toll on top of JOF already existing within the context of a mission field that according to MissionInsite.com reports that "35.1% (34.5% US Avg.) of the residents in the area don't believe in God, 41.2% (35.4% US Avg.) no longer believe, 42.5% (43.1% US Avg.) are unsure about personal beliefs, and a whopping 47.1% (45.7% US Avg) say faith wasn't relevant to their lives. Additionally, 64.4% (63.2% US Avg) refuse to participate in church because they didn't feel welcomed."[15]

On a deeper contextual level, the greater majority of JOF's constituency makes a twenty-to-thirty-minute commute one way to the campus from week to week, largely out of their love for their church. The core of the membership ranges between fifty-seven to one hundred, which indicates that the majority live on a fixed income. The wider age of Journey of Faith's demographic ranges from zero to one hundred years old. In 2019, the leadership team acknowledged a deficit in younger families and singles between the ages of twenty to forty-five. The pandemic only exacerbated this deficiency, as many of the Gen Xers and Millennials began to disconnect from attendance despite the digital platforms that were provided. In all of this, another problem was highlighted and exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic when the leadership team began to take notice of the failure of the congregation to begin the process of making local or community-grown disciples within Humble and the surrounding areas. That is to say that Love UMC started in the Scenic Woods community, and its growth was largely impacted by the fact that most of its constituency lived in the immediate neighborhood.

[15] MissionInsite, "Comparative Report," MissionInsite, https://peopleview.missioninsite.com/app/#/welcome/demographics/step-3.

The Journey of Merging

One of the leading challenges that Journey of Faith has wrestled with over the last nine years centers on the multiple mergers that have taken place. Integrating the contexts and the multiple sub-contexts that existed within Love UMC, Mt. Corinth UMC, and Day Break UMC has been both rewarding and problematic. Largely because laity generally wants to feel that they are significant to their church and the decision-making process, and no one wants to be left out on an island by themselves. Although, this is a wonderful contextual observation, the conflicts over the first four to six years arose when my predecessor and I (prayerfully) discerned and elected leaders into positions to create a balance of representation in conversation with our nominating committees.

Nevertheless, by God's grace, we have navigated the terrain of creating equality within the context of Journey of Faith. In addition, the task for me as a newly appointed pastor in 2017, was to navigate the cliques within the context, while working to transition them from a small church or family system church to a large program system church. People will almost always group up with others who are either like-minded or similar in their thinking. Thus, for us to keep moving the needle of progress there must be a process of onboarding the leader of the pack or someone within the group that has influence with the others.

The Journey Toward Economic Development and Opportunities

The socioeconomic status of the laity within Journey of Faith ranges from poor to wealthy. All the socioeconomic classes are represented within a two-mile radius of

Journey of Faith. Nevertheless, there is a need to confront the economic disparities within the context of the church and its mission field.

> The average household income across Humble by race and ethnicity within the 77396-zip code alone includes White $105,641, Black/African American $87,624, American Indian/Alaskan Native $73,750, Asian $132,623, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander $82,167, Hispanic/Latino $95,137, and Non-Hispanic/Latino $113,280. However, there are 1,129 families living below poverty (with 821 Families living below poverty with children) throughout the City of Humble.[16]

This can only mean that Journey of Faith has a golden opportunity to provide economic development programs that educate in the area of financial literacy, entrepreneurship, investing, and real estate investment. As a reminder, "The City of Humble by race and ethnicity within the 77396-zip code include White 45.6%, Black/African American 31.46%, American Indian/Alaskan Native 0.78%, Asian 3.73%, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 0.24%, Hispanic/Latino 45.52%, and Non-Hispanic/Latino 54.48%."[17] There is a rich Hispanic population within the ministry context that can no longer be ignored. Such an opportunity not only empowers the black community, then it has the propensity to empower all people of color. Furthermore, I assert that if it is reported that "oil and gas companies operating in Texas sent more than $10 billion in production taxes to the state in fiscal year 2022," then those dollars plus the dollars of all the other industries represented across the state of Texas should be flowing

[16] Houston State of Health, "2022 Demographics," Houston State of Health, https://www.houstonstateofhealth.com/demographicdata?id=2675&sectionId=936.

[17] Houston State of Health, "2022 Demographics of 77396," Houston State of Health, https://www.houstonstateofhealth.com/demographicdata?id=38671.

through the Kingdom of God in mission to the community and the world to make more Disciples of Jesus Christ.[18]

The Journey to Increased Participation

One of the areas that has been a source of frustration for the leadership team has been lack of participation across the board. Recruiting members to participate in a ministry that aligns with their spiritual gifts or one of our programs that aligns with their passion is a constant struggle. Especially, if a ministry event takes place any time in the middle of the week. Perhaps, the main reason for this can be identified across a combination of reasons. First, the greater majority of Journey of Faith's constituency makes a twenty-to-thirty-minute commute one way to the campus from week to week.

Most of our families have young children or grandchildren, which means from week to week they are commuting to work, picking kids up from school, getting kids to extra-curricular activities, and still having to make dinner, inspect homework, and get ready for bed to start the process all over again the next day. I am certain that the family has to make the decision to prioritize proximity of the church and the amount of time needed to serve at the church and fulfill their other duties. Then there is the age factor whereby the core of the membership represents ages over fifty-seven and most of them do not drive at night. This highlights three things: 1) The need to reach younger families and or singles between the ages of twenty to forty-five, 2) The need to reach into the local

[18] Kyra Buckley, "Texas Collects More Than $10 Billion in Taxes From Oil and Gas Production, Comptroller Said," Houston Chronicle Online, https://www.houstonchronicle.com/business/energy/article/Texas-collects-more-than-10-billion-in-taxes-17416179.php.

ministry context to draw in local disciples, 3) The need to avail more daytime programs designed to meet our senior saints.

The Journey to Discipleship

I affirm that lack of participation can also highlight a deficiency in discipleship within the ministry context internally and externally. In part the commute to and from Journey of Faith regarding weekly Bible Study attendance, has always been insufficiently low. Sunday worship attendance as it is in many other churches tends to fluctuate as well. In my observation this alone is a much smaller matter in comparison to the one that has been right under our noses the whole time. The laity at Journey of Faith have a reputation for participating in what they choose when they are ready. Moreover, they make time to attend their other endeavors, and are sure to inform me of those priorities in their lives (before leaving or upon return).

Therefore, based on this pattern of inconsistency with attendance, serving, generosity in giving, sharing their witness, and the lack of prioritizing devotional life; I affirm that Journey of Faith suffers from deficient discipleship. Our spiritual growth cannot afford to hang solely on attending the Sunday morning worship experience. Thus, Journey of Faith must move beyond the point of only seeking *just enough* Jesus, and into a deeper relationship with him that reflects more than a shallow spiritual connection to their lives. If we only park at the surface of desire to receive just enough Jesus into our lives, we will forfeit a life-changing-transformative encounter with Him. Hence, I assert that this presents a call and opportunity for the lay body to take a deeper journey into their spiritual formation as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Journey of Tenacity

It has been critical from my vantage point to continue affirming the members of Journey of Faith and their tenacity over the years. Given some of the disappointments, challenges, and hurdles that they have endured, I am fiercely passionate about the opportunity of the invitation to deepen their lives because they have modeled an ability to keep pushing and fighting for their community. Despite the obstacles and the many times, they have disagreed with each other or with the pastor; this nine-year-old church with a sixty-eight-year history is proof of their tenacity. Their tenacity is the quality that they possess to never give up on meeting together. However, the location of the church and proximity from their home base in addition to the contributing factors, has caused a shift of their priorities. Thus, I simply affirm the call to prioritize development of a deeper devotional life to redirect the tenacity of the ministry context towards building for future generations.

The Journey to Honor the Past

It is important to have that fight and determination as a disciple, to build the Kingdom of God. However, when the fight and determination shackle you to past victories and accomplishments, it will ultimately stifle your progress individually and corporately. Much like the Children of Israel, who throughout the Exodus and their time in the wilderness spent a greater majority of their time looking back and in many cases wishing to go back to what they perceived was good.

Journey of Faith has spent valuable time fighting to use strategies that were developed for the mission fields where each of their respective churches originated, and

they must step into the reality that those strategies are not working within the current framework of their context in Humble, Texas. The Israelites could not fully enjoy the promises ahead of them for their desire to go back. Hence, we must create a portal that honors the past while looking forward to the promises of God for our ministry context. There is absolutely nothing wrong with passing tradition forward. Nonetheless, we must pass it forward that the next generation can re-interpret and re-present those values to fit their current and future contexts.

Our Journey to Building Bridges

As a diplomat of the Kingdom of God, I possess a grace for building bridges that will help connect and expose myself and others to greater possibilities. I am passionate about helping others realize how much we all have in common. Nonetheless, if our lens is limited to engaging one another based on our color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or political stance, we will never know how much we can accomplish. I merely echo the timeless words of John Fawcett's classic hymn (1782), "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above."[19] Christian love is the tie that binds us and holds us accountable to engage in deeper fellowship as the Body of Christ. For this reason, I see an opportunity whereby this ministry context can benefit from a process of bridge building that will not only impact the ministry context internally but externally as well. I am certain that we can build bridges that will connect and tie us to the community around us.

[19] The United Methodist Hymnal, *Blest Be the Tie That Binds* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 557.

Our Journey to Focus Our Priority

We are purposed to be revolutionaries for the Kingdom of God, and I affirm that I am committed to building bridges across this ministry context. In every way, it is my hope and desire to direct the focus of Journey of Faith toward a strategic plan that helps us prioritize our discipleship pathway: gathering for worship, growing in discipleship, serving in ministry and community, and sharing in witness to the world. It is tempting to want to develop innovative marketing strategies, push the envelope on branding, and organize programs that meet the community's needs. However, all our endeavors must be grounded in helping everyone in the ministry context connect to Journey of Faith's discipleship pathway. Thus, connecting individuals to a cycle or spiritual rhythm for living.

Our Journey to Making Disciples

Our mission at Journey of Faith is, to make disciples that will make more disciples for Jesus Christ. Henceforth, as we grow deeper into our discipleship commitments, we will develop a passion for reaching out to others to guide them into an intimate relationship with Christ. I distinctly remember Dr. Elaine Heath, my former Evangelism Professor at Perkins School of Theology saying, "If the Church focused on making disciples for Jesus Christ, a disciple can ignore the needs of the church nor the community." I believe there is a need to target men within the context of the Journey of Faith. Truthfully, we have some good men, however, the representation of men between the ages of twenty to forty-five needs to be addressed.

Remember, within the context of the 77396-zip code where Journey of Faith is located, MissionInsite.com, reports that "35.1% (34.5% US Avg.) of the residents in the area don't believe in God, 41.2% (35.4% US Avg.) no longer believe, 42.5% (43.1% US Avg.) are unsure about personal beliefs, and a whopping 47.1% (45.7% US Avg) say faith wasn't relevant to their lives. Additionally, 64.4% (63.2% US Avg) refuse to participate in church because they didn't feel welcomed."[20] Therefore, the data demonstrates that almost half of the contextual population is struggling with faith in God, and this only indicates there is a clarion call for Journey of Faith to reach into the immediate community to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ.

Our Journey to Passionate Worship

Moreover, with my background in worship, I admit that I am a true worshipper by nature. Passionate worship has shaped my life, and I am on a mission to partner with the Holy Spirit and the members of Journey of Faith to foster a culture of passionate worship. This means that when we gather, whether in small groups, ministry events, or even for a weekend service, we can count on having an authentic worship encounter. Once again, this requires us to blend the traditional with the contemporary. There are multiple ways to initiate a synergy between the traditional and contemporary. Worship and praise are paramount to our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ, and we should encounter passionate worship that produces much fruit.

[20] MissionInsite, "Comparative Report," MissionInsite, https://peopleview.missioninsite.com/app/#/welcome/demographics/step-3.

Our Journey to Advocate Community Development

The words of the Lord came from the prophet Jeremiah (29:5-7, NRSV) to those remaining elders among the exiles in Babylon saying:

> Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Education, economic empowerment, and community development are near and dear to my heart, and I believe that the presence of any church in any context should provoke and influence the transformation of the contextual landscape. Journey of Faith's mission field is ripe for organizing programs and initiatives that will advocate for educational excellence, generate a shift in the local economy, and create a demand for constructing and or acquiring spaces that house community programs and provides the convenience of local shopping centers. As the visionary, it is critical for me to utilize the resources at my grasp to partner with the ministry context to see this vision come to fruition. I affirm that this can be accomplished as a fruitful component of my doctoral project.

Our Journey as Kingdom Builders

According to Matthew 6:33, (AMP) "But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right—the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also." I subscribe to the mindset that the Church (including the ministry context of Journey of Faith) should not lack the resources to do the work of the Kingdom of God. Thus, it is imperative to

ensure that we prioritize growing as disciples of Jesus Christ to align ourselves with His perfect will. When we strive after the things of righteousness that concern our God, we will have greater access to His resources. It requires a life of devotion, prayer, service, and witnessing.

In conclusion, I assert that the topic of my doctoral project proposes the existence of a synergy between Journey of Faith and I, that insists on the need to develop a discipleship plan that invites anyone from any walk of life to engage in a discipleship pathway. More specifically, as a starting point for this project, it is necessary to invite men into small groups with a charge to commit to a rhythm of devotional life. My presupposition embodies a curiosity for studying how the ministry context take shape when the men step to the frontline of accountable spiritual formation. As a result of my doctoral project, I hope to gain further insight into the power of authentic discipleship.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The objective of this body of work centers on the gospel according to Matthew with specific attention given to Matthew 4:18-22, NRSV, which states:

> As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him (Matt. 4:18-22, NRSV).[1]

Introduction

I presuppose that the central thesis of Matthew 4:18-22 provides a repetitive pathway necessary for making disciples. Throughout this body of work, I will exegetically examine this pericope employing several tools of observation including examination of the historical context, which involves the biblical writer, the biblical audience, and any historical-cultural elements touched on by the passage itself. Next, I will examine the literary context of the passage by identifying the type of literary genre of the gospel according to Matthew to employ the literary devices appropriate for this passage, such as euphemisms, allusion, imagery, and or foreshadowing. Thirdly, I will

[1] Biblical citations are found in the New Standard Revised Version unless otherwise stated, Matthew 4:18-22.

examine the formal analysis of Matthew 4:18-22, consisting of the form, structure, and movement, in relation to the wider Gospel of Matthew, providing a detailed analysis while also offering a synthesis and conclusion to the pericope along with an exegetical reflection.

Overview of the Biblical Texts and Themes:

Matthew 4:18-22 is a very familiar pericope that highlights Jesus' invitation to the first disciples to follow him. The preceding passage marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. In the immediate passage following Jesus' invitation to his first disciples, we find him ministering to crowds of people throughout Galilee. Scholarship asserts that Matthew suggests his themes across the whole of the gospel by repeating keywords such as: "angel of the Lord" four times in 1:18-2:23; "righteousness" five times in chapters five through seven; "send/apostle" four times in 10:2-42; "judgment" seven times in 11:20-12:45; "Pharisee" four times in 12:1-45; "forgive" four times in chapter 18; "follow" nine times in chapters eight through nine and six times in chapters nineteen through twenty, and "Son of Man" six times in chapter twenty-four.[2]

Moreover, the theme of "kingship" is a feature prominently woven throughout Matthew's account of the gospel, and Jesus is seen as the Messiah (Christ) seventeen times. In addition, Matthew refers to Jesus as "the Son of David" eight times, an expression with overtones of royalty.[3] It is apparent that Matthew desires to inform his

[2] Ulrich Luz, *Hermeneia — Matthew 1-7: Introduction,* ed. Helmet Koester, trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 6.

[3] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 3-4.

readers through the lens of how he sees, accepts, and experiences the life and ministry of Jesus, within the framework of a consciousness that subscribes Christ as the chosen One. Thus, the themes that the evangelist employs throughout the whole of the gospel provide a platform for us to prioritize and examine Matthew 4:18-22 given the imagery set before us.

Exegesis

Historical Context

Upon hearing of the arrest of John the Baptist, Matthew informs every reader and hearer (Matt. 4:12-17) that Jesus launches his ministry as a fulfillment of the prophecy spoken by the prophet Isaiah (9:1-2): "Land of Zebulun…land of Naphtali, [on the road by the sea], [across] the Jordan, Galilee of the [Gentiles]. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined."

Matthew uses Isaiah's words to Israel as a reassurance to his readers that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to deliver them out of the hands of their oppressors. According to Michael Joseph Brown, "Matthew tells us that [Galilee of the Gentiles] is the place where Jesus' ministry will unfold. This prophecy is a powerful first indication that Jesus' message will reach beyond the confines of Judaism…. Jesus does his work

among a mixed group of Jews, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, immigrants, and others that constituted the region of Galilee."[4]

Therefore, as we narrowly focus on Matthew 4:18-22, a closer look helps us to see that the framework for Jesus' considerably wider ministerial agenda to reach and save all of humanity, both Jews and Gentiles, has been set, even because Matthew's account of the gospel was designed exclusively to reach the Jewish community. An account of Matthew's decision to write a Gospel in Hebrew or Aramaic stems from the testimony of Papias, the Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia (died c. A.D. 130). This record of Papias's statement about Matthew survives only in Eusebius (Historia Ecclesiastica 3.39.16); which reads as such, "Matthew collected the oracles in the Hebrew language, and each interpreted them as best he could."[5] Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that Galilee was a rather diverse region, and regardless of Matthew's agenda, Jesus' message is clear to whosoever will repent and follow Him.

By the time of the events in Matthew 4:18-22, Jesus left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum, a town located off the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee. While he does not provide the day of the week nor the time of day, Matthew simply asserts that Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee one day and he saw two brothers. Notice that between verses eighteen and twenty-one Matthew uses the term brother four times. The Greek term here not only denotes two or more that are born of the same parents (or the same father or mother), but the same is also symbolic of a fellow believer, united to another by

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[4] Michael Joseph Brown, *True Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary — Matthew 4:12-25,* eds. Brian K. Blount, Cain Hope Felder, Clarice J. Martin, and Emerson B. Powery (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 91.

[5] Joel B. Green, Scott McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and The Gospels: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 527.

the bond of affection. This term simply implies that we as believers are invited into a bond of affection and being kindred through Jesus Christ who says in John 13:34-35, (ESV), “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.”

Thus, Jesus sees and engages the first pair of his disciples, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew his brother, who were both fishermen at work casting their net into the sea. Matthew implies here that it is worth mentioning that the brothers were likely casting a single net into the water to catch the fish in abundance. Therefore, it is highly probable that the net was rather large considering they needed to catch as many fish as they could to make a profit to support them and their fishing business.

Furthermore, the mention of the single net they were casting denotes that they had to work together to throw or cast the net to accomplish their goal of catching the fish. Within the framework of the narrative, Matthew provides an illustrative sneak preview of a fisherman’s profession through the lens of what Jesus has identified in the work of Simon and Andrew and ultimately used as common language to invite the brothers into a relationship with him.

In verse nineteen of the passage, Jesus calls out to Simon and Andrew, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” The word follow in this sense implies urging in calling*;* Here! Come! This simple invitation is boldly radical considering Matthew does not suggest that Jesus knew the brothers from a previous engagement, and seems to presuppose that Jesus does not know and has never met the brothers. Even still, Jesus’

invitation to them insists on their need to respond to his urgent calling by dropping the very trade that supports their livelihood and trusting him completely.

Moreover, Leon Morris says, "We should not miss the point that Jewish teachers did not normally "call" their disciples. It was something new that Jesus took the initiative and called those whom he would have as disciples."[6] Finally, Jesus's urgent call to follow him not only means that they must drop everything, nor does it just mean that they have to trust him completely, but they must also submit and allow him to teach them how to make them fishers of people. John Wesley's charge to his preachers rings similarly true to the priorities of the kingdom:

> You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore, spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those that want you, but to those that want you most. Observe: It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord.[7]

I affirm with Wesley, that there is a mission for every believer (clergy and laity) alike to draw closer to Jesus while being allowed to fish for other souls. The text indicates that Jesus does not just call Simon and Andrew, but they both follow him from there and witness him as he sees two other brothers, James and John, in a boat with their father.

Jesus has set his attention on extending his invitation to James and John even as they are working with their father. While Jesus encountered Simon and Andrew at work casting their nets, Matthew does not reveal whether they were in a boat or wading in the

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[6] Morris, *According to Matthew*, 84.

[7] Robert E. Coleman, *Nothing to Do But to Save Souls: John Wesley's Charge to His Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1990), 1, 16.

water while casting their nets. However, based on the detail that he provides regarding James and John working in the boat with their father, we can assume the latter of Simon and Andrew.

The imagery of James and John working in the boat with their father suggests that it is highly probable that they have a family fishing business, and even if they were only fishing for leisure, casting, and dragging their nets across the floor bed of the Sea of Galilee over time would have created wear and tear on their nets, and Jesus encounters them as they are mending their nets. Once again, we find the family working together to accomplish a goal; except in this portion of the narrative, the imagery shifts our attention to James, John, and Zebedee's need to repair the nets in the places where the demand of the day-to-day casting and dragging has caused the material of their nets to weaken and rip apart.

Jesus meets them at the intersection of work and mending, and again in his boldly radical fashion, he extends an urgent call to the brothers James and John to drop and leave everything (including their father) to join him on a journey for the greater opportunity to learn how to fish for people. Through the lens of our existential culture, it is hard to imagine that Zebedee, the patriarch of the family, did not feel as though his priorities were just pushed to the side. Matthew does not spend any time offering an explanation or disposition on the end of Zebedee or Jesus. Nevertheless, we can presume that the Divine will always command creation to submit to His will and purpose. Jesus confirmed this when he said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (Jn. 9:4). This most certainly falls in line with

one of the core themes of Matthew's Gospel which affirms Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, and the Son of God.

Literary Context

Many debates around the origin and authorship of this Gospel have insisted one way or the other that the Apostle Matthew was the original writer. Yet other interpretations have argued that the greater portion of Matthew was not penned by Matthew. Instead of the disciple, it is supposed that this Gospel was composed perhaps by someone named Matthew who played an important role in formulating the teaching of the gospel or in leading the community from which the gospel originated.[8] Other scholars assert that linguistic evidence suggests the gospel was originally composed in Greek against the contention that it was originally composed in Aramaic.[9]

Coincidentally, the literary focus of Matthew regarding the date depends partly on that of Mark because Mark is considered one of the sources. While it is widely believed that the first Gospel of the New Testament is dependent on the Gospel of Mark as its original source, most scholars agree that it is difficult to pinpoint a date of composition. Mark is thought to have been written circa A.D. 65, which would leave Matthew to have been written at the earliest in around A.D. 70.[10]

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[8] Warren Carter, "The Gospel According to Matthew," in *The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version,* eds. Walter J. Harrelson, Donald Senior, Abraham Smith, Phyllis Trible and James C. VanderKam (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 1745.

[9] Joel B. Green, Scott McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and The Gospels: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 527.

[10] Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 8-9.

Despite the location of Matthew 4:18-22 near the end of chapter four, the wider literary context of Matthew consistently guides our attention towards a thematic thrust that centers on God's kingdom. Therefore, as focus shifts to the wider context, we find a brief exegetical outline of Matthew provided in The New Interpreter's Study Bible—NRSVA, by scholar, Warren Carter that suggests the following literary structure:

I. Jesus Conceived, Commissioned, Resisted, Witnessed to, Confirmed, and Faithful (1:1 – 4:16)

II. Jesus' Ministry Begins (4:17 – 11:1)

III. The Twofold Response to Jesus' Ministry (11:2 – 16:20)

IV. Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem and the Cross (16:21 – 20:34)

V. Jesus in Jerusalem: The Empire Strikes Back (17:14 – 20:34)

VI. God Thwarts the Rulers (28:1-20)[11]

This outline helps us to visualize the general literary focus of Matthew at a glance to examine how the foundational pericope in discussion is situated within section two, chapter four of the wider context. It is appropriate to highlight that within the progression of the gospel leading up to our foundational pericope (section one, chapter four) we find that Jesus resists Satan's Temptation (4:1-11) only after the preceding passage where God confirms Jesus as God's agent (3:13-17).

Following Jesus' resistance to Satan's temptation, Matthew tells the reader that Jesus moves to Galilee (4:12-16), and by the time we arrive at the opening of section two, chapter four, Matthew's narrative shifts so that our focus encounters how Jesus' ministry

[11] Warren Carter, "The Gospel According to Matthew," in *The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha,* eds. Walter J. Harrelson, Donald Senior, Abraham Smith, Phyllis Trible, and James C. VanderKam (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 1746-1747.

begins (4:17-11:1). Within the finer context of this shift, Jesus announces God's reign and saving presence (4:17), calls disciples (4:18-22), and heals (4:23-25). At the beginning of chapter five, Matthew invites his readers to engage with The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:28).[12]

Form (Genre), Structure, Movement

Historical and contemporary scholarship distinguishes the Gospel of Matthew as an ancient biography. It should not be exclusively confined to an eyewitness account of the life of Jesus. However, as an ancient biography, it uses a chronological framework and episodic structure to describe the life, deeds, teachings, and death of a significant person. Structurally this pericope is grounded within the framework of a narration, highlighting the initiation of Jesus' first disciples according to Matthew's account of the narrative's progression.

The movement of the narrative can be divided into four parts that provide an outline whereby we can analyze the pericope and what Matthew intends to communicate to his readers. The divisions are as follows:

a) Searches — Jesus is looking for opportunity (v18a)
    a. Surveying his mission field
b) Identifies — Jesus sees two brothers (v.18b-18g)
c) Invites — Jesus calls and urges them to come with him (vv.19-20)
    a. Gives an opportunity and purpose to follow him (v.19)
    b. Jesus' invitation becomes their (disciples) priority (v.20)

[12] Carter, "The Gospel According to Matthew," 1746-1747.

d) Demonstrates — Jesus repeats the process as his new follower's witness (vv.21-22)
    a. Jesus searches again for opportunity (v.21a)
    b. He identifies two additional prospects (v.21b-21e)
    c. He extends an invitation again (v.21f-22)

Detailed Analysis

Searches — Jesus is Looking for Opportunity (v. 18a)

In verse 18a "as he walked," we should note that it can be more appropriately interpreted that this word means making one's way, progress, or to make use of opportunities, which suggests that Jesus is making use of the opportunity. In fulfilling the next part of his earthly ministry, he is searching (technically the first action of his recruiting method) for the opportunity to recruit followers. By implication, Jesus' search marks the beginning of his mission to raise his first disciples by surveying his mission field. Thus, in verse 18a, Matthew's account suggests to his audience that in following Jesus' model for pursuing disciples for Christ, one must make use of the opportunity to go and search for disciples, especially when the opportunities present exist within the framework of a socially diverse context such as Galilee.

Galilee is a region in northern Palestine which means "circuit" because it is bound on the north by Syria, on the west by Sidon, Tyre, and Ptolemais, on the south by Samaria, and on the east by the Jordan River. N. T. Wright asserts that Galilee during the lifetime of Jesus was a cosmopolitan area, with soldiers, wayfarers, pilgrims, and

peddlers coming and going, as well as the local population.[13] Also, it is necessary to understand that the Sea of Galilee, also called Lake Tiberias or Kinneret, is more appropriately identified as a freshwater lake through which the Jordan River flows.

Identifies — Jesus Saw Two Brothers (v.18b-18g)

Whereas the opportunity in the Galilean region is symbolic of its diversity, it is safe to presume that Jesus recognizes the relativity of diverse opportunity on the shores of the Sea of Galilee in his search. Verse 18b-e encompasses the second action of Jesus who identifies the two brothers Simon (Peter) and Andrew. The text denotes "he saw" or more properly stated it asserts he perceived, noticed, discerned, examined, or discovered two brothers. This language is critical to understanding Matthew's narrative when visualizing Jesus as he identifies the first pair of his disciples that happened to be related. This second action of Jesus then proposes that identifying and discipling family is essential in Jesus' eyes to searching for disciples of Jesus Christ.

Simon and Andrew were a family of fishermen who were casting a net into the sea (18f-g). Thus, Jesus encounters the brothers while in the middle of working together to cast their net. We do not know if they are pushing to meet a quota, nor do we know the time of day, whether morning, noon, or evening. Matthew's narrative account does not offer any such details for his readers to glean. Nevertheless, we know that they are fishermen, and this implies that they operated in the language of the twenty-first century as a small fishing business. They worked as families, not for huge profits, but to make

[13] N. T. Wright, *Matthew for Everyone: Part 1, Chapters 1-15* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 32.

enough to live and have a little left over. It was hard work, and sometimes dangerous. Their lives were modestly secure but hardly luxurious.[14]

Invites — Jesus Calls and Urges them to Come with Him (vv.19-20)

Jesus has identified Simon and Andrew for a purpose amidst the demands of their work as fishermen, and the text indicates the third action of Jesus is to extend an invitation to the brothers, who immediately drop everything. Jesus gives them the opportunity in verse 19a-b, "And he said to them, 'Follow me.'" In this phrase, Jesus was calling or urging them to come. His call requires them to respond with urgency, even while he explains the purpose for following him in the same breath, verse 19c, "and I will make you fish for people." It should be noted that this phrase restated simply means, "and I will turn you into fishers of people." Thus, Matthew prescribes that Jesus desires to deconstruct and reconstruct his disciples for fishing for people.

Subsequently, reforming a disciple for purpose within the mandate of Jesus' urgent call implies that the narrative impresses upon its hearers the importance of Jesus' invitation becoming the disciple's priority (v. 20). The text says, "Immediately they left their nets and followed him." First and foremost, his urgent invitation is radically counter-cultural considering it was uncommon in Jewish tradition for a rabbi to choose their followers. On the contrary, ancient tradition held that followers would identify, choose, and follow their rabbi. Yet, Matthew's account highlights Jesus' very radical action within the framework of his invitation.

[14] Wright, *Matthew for Everyone*, 31-32.

Secondly, the brothers immediately let go of their livelihood and decided to prioritize following Jesus. Matthew suggests that following Jesus takes immediate precedence over any and everything, and a true disciples' responsive decision to drop all and follow must be certain. A contrasting response to Jesus' invitation is found in Luke 9:59-60, where Jesus extends an invitation to a man to "Follow Me," and the man declares to Jesus that he will follow him if he allows him to go and bury their father to which Jesus responds "Let the dead bury their own dead, but as for you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." In essence, Jesus asserts here that the dead are destitute of power and spiritually dead.

Why would a true disciple who is willing to follow Jesus be preoccupied with someone who has no authority or power over their spiritual well-being? This point is confirmed in Matthew's account when Simon and Andrew immediately drop everything to follow him. His call is not to discourage loving your family or your passion for what you do. In lieu, it is a call to prioritize these and anything else as you (the disciple) prioritize and align your spiritual welfare with Jesus' agenda.

Jesus Repeats the Process as His New Followers Witness (vv. 21-22)

As Jesus moves on from the place where he found Simon and Andrew on the shore of the sea, it is apparent that he wastes no time on his mission to recruit more disciples. By executing action four, Jesus seizes the opportunity while in the presence of his two newly recruited disciples to demonstrate his method for recruiting disciples. Within the framework of this demonstrative action, Jesus replicates actions one through four all over again, initiating his search for an opportunity to recruit potential disciples (v.

21a). By showing this diligence, Matthew suggests that Jesus is never slack and is constantly surveying his mission field in his search for an opportunity to reach a disciple, reflecting one of the wider themes of Matthew's Gospel which is the agenda of the Kingdom of God.

In verse 21b-e, when he sees two other brothers, James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John, Jesus again employs action two. He identifies two more potential disciples working in the boat with their father. Jesus again notices two potential disciples laboring to support the family business, only this time their father is at work with them as they are mending their nets. The word mending indicates they were repairing what had been broken.

Fortunately, the mender of broken people, systems, and the world has found them and identified them for his purpose to net and bring healing to the brokenness of the world. Thus, Jesus demonstrates that he will always identify an opportunity to meet those he is searching for right where they are whether in the water or the boat, in shallow waters or deep waters. He extends an invitation again (v. 21f) to James and John by simply calling out to them. His invitation, action three of his discipleship model, here methodically indicates one who calls or utters with a loud voice. Therefore, the tone of his invitation once again expresses a posture of urgency and authority. The replication of his call to Simon and Peter is demonstrated here as they now watch the Master Rabbi passionately extend his call to James and John, presenting them with an opportunity and purpose to follow him.

In verse twenty-two, Jesus' invitation becomes the disciple's priority as the text asserts that James and John immediately left the boat and their father and followed him.

In the preceding verses, Matthew indicates that Simon and Andrew immediately left their nets to follow him. There is no mention of a boat or any other relative(s) at the place where Jesus found them. Nevertheless, in verses twenty-one and twenty-two, Matthew points out the fact that James and John left the boat. The word "left" in verse twenty-two should be understood as to leave behind, abandon, or allow not to hinder to go to another place.

Therefore, while they were working in that boat to mend their nets along with their father, they abandoned their responsibilities to their father and the family business so that it would not hinder their invitation to follow Jesus. Their willingness to make such a bold decision to abandon everything, including their father, demonstrates a bold act of faith, humility, and obedience. In John 10:27, Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Hence, all four disciples have responded to the call of the Good Shepherd to follow him in faith as he teaches them how to fish for people. From the very beginning, Jesus establishes and demonstrates an apprentice model whereby his disciples gain front-row access to the process of making disciples.

Summary

Synthesis

In the preamble of this pericope, the first evangelist composes a narrative examining Jesus as he recruits his first four disciples. The simplicity and profundity of the passage provide significant details regarding the actions that Jesus takes to secure his

initial recruits. Therefore, I am inclined to believe that the central thesis of Matthew 4:18-22 provides a repetitive pathway necessary for making disciples.

Thus, I affirm that Matthew highlights Jesus' progression throughout this passage and confirms this model for replicating disciples across four actions as he a) travels to search for them, b) looks around to identify them, c) extends an urgent invitation to them, and d) repeats the first three actions by demonstrating them for his disciples. As the narrative concludes, Jesus has fully engaged in his mission to replicate disciples as he makes his journey towards the cross for his final victory.

Exegetical Reflection

The pericope provides an interpretive rhythm that frames a melodic refrain to the tune of the question of what areas of our life today this passage speaks. Interpretively speaking, I would like to suggest three ways wherein the passage speaks. Firstly, it speaks to how our lives should reflect the actions of Jesus' passion for making other disciples for him. Secondly, when we find ourselves feeling as though we have nothing else to do as a believer, Jesus reminds us that there will always be opportunities for making disciples and will go forth to make more disciples, we need to repeat his disciple-making actions all over again while demonstrating those actions for others. Finally, it is a constant reminder to reflect on where we were when he called us to follow him.

First, when we accepted Christ, we did so on the premise that we would commit ourselves to a lifetime of spiritual growth and maturity. Our commitment encompasses the need to follow Jesus to learn how to live, love, and lead more and more like him every day. Matthew's narrative seems to suggest this very point about how our lives

should reflect the actions of Jesus' passion for making other disciples for him. As Jesus sought opportunities to bring the disciples closer to him, we must seek opportunities to allow Jesus' impression on our lives to reach others for the Kingdom of God. Just as Jesus acted upon his desire to make disciples, our lives must reflect the same desire to make more and more disciples.

Secondly, when we find ourselves feeling as though we have nothing else to do, Jesus reminds us that we can start all over again while demonstrating what he did for others. There is always time and opportunity for believers to make disciples of Jesus Christ. The problem most often seems that many believers discover this treasure of abundant life in Jesus, and they set this treasure aside, like the man in Luke 19:20, neglecting to use this Treasure (Jesus) to replicate more disciples. Nevertheless, in this pericope, Jesus searches, identifies, invites, and demonstrates the process repeatedly. Moreover, he reminds us that we are family and can make disciples together. The first evangelist carefully denotes that Simon and Andrew were casting the net together so they might catch as many fish as they could drag in; while James, John, and Zebedee were mending their nets. The evangelist seems to suggest that Jesus wants to use us to cast the net of goodness for others so that he can meet people in the scattered places in their lives for him to meet them into a place of mending and a fruitful relationship with him.

Finally, it is a constant reminder for us to reflect on where we were when he called us out to follow him. In reality, Jesus found many of us working very hard on the pathway to destruction, and this pericope provides a motivating reflection for every believer. It provides an opportunity for us to share his compassion with others as we remember and reflect on where we were when Jesus found us. It prods us to look into the

mirror of the soul and ask questions such as: What condition was my heart in when Jesus found me? What state of mind did Jesus have to pull me out of? Despite my brokenness, he thought I was worth following him.

In conclusion, the topic of my doctoral project proposes a requisite synergy between Journey of Faith Church and myself that insists on the need to develop a discipleship plan that invites people from various walks of life to engage in the cycle of discipleship making. Matthew 4:18-22 is a necessary pericope to the foundation of this doctoral project considering Journey of Faith lacks a viable tool for measuring the effectiveness of its mission to make disciples for Jesus Christ. I, therefore, suspect that implementation of the proper tool for measuring the growth of disciples will present data that will impact the spiritual maturity of its context both personally and corporately.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

John Wesley's encounter with the book *The Country Parson's Advice to His Parishioners,* written during King William's reign some thirty years before their first organized meetings, is said to have had an impact on the organization of Wesley's, societies, classes, and band meetings.[1] In a letter in the *London Magazine* (1760), Wesley wrote that the following words influenced his desire to organize the early meetings at Oxford: "If good men of the Church will unite together in the several parts of the kingdom, disposing themselves into friendly societies, and engaging each other, in their respective combinations, to be helpful to each other in all good Christian ways, it will be the most effectual means for restoring our decaying Christianity to its primitive life and vigour, and the supporting of our tottering and sinking Church."[2]

The group of young zealous churchmen who approved and decided to follow the advice would earn the nickname Methodists.[3] The advice in the aforementioned book would become a catechism for all of those that met in the 'Holy Club' at Oxford

[1] John S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* (London, UK: The Epworth Press, 1955, originally 1921), 9.

[2] Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 9.

[3] Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 9.

University.[4] However, John S. Simon suggests that Wesley was mistaken in that this book, *The Country Parson's Advice to His Parishioners,* was first published in 1680 during the reign of King Charles II; wherein a second edition was issued in 1701, the year before the death of King William. It was further suggested by Simon that the second edition of this literature was what John Wesley was referring to in his 1760 letter.[5]

Enlightening here is the fact that John and his brother Charles Wesley's formation of the early religious societies was not necessarily a new phenomenon. On the contrary, Simon suggests in *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* that religious societies existed long before John Wesley even conceived the idea of forming a religious community. By his admission, John Wesley wrote that he was led to organize some thirty years after his initial engagement of the literature.[6] Nevertheless, if we are to understand the deep sense of piety that provided the framework that shaped the identity of the family called Methodists and the rich history of the religious societies that John and his brother Charles Wesley organized and replicated, we must look deeper into the history of religious societies and their origins.

Furthermore, a deeper exploration into the history of religious societies and their origins will underscore the relevance of Wesley's small group models to the discipleship tool that my doctoral project seeks to develop. For this reason, my focus throughout this body of work will narrowly examine a brief context of John and Charles Wesley, whereby I will offer a glimpse at their early years and family life. I will then highlight

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[4] Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 9.

[5] Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 9.

[6] Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies,* 10.

Wesley's time at Christ Church College in Oxford as I analyze the origins and birth of the Methodist movement, giving particular attention to the formation of the Oxford Holy Club. I will attempt to entertain questions such as: What was it? And why was it so impactful?

Thirdly, I will attempt to take a narrow glance into the scope of John Wesley's small group models, starting with the historicity of the societies and the rules of accountability that were necessary for organizing and or joining a society. Next, I will turn my attention toward the need for organizing bands and finally make observations regarding the revelation for organizing classes. After my findings, I will attempt to identify the foundational relevancy of this historical movement to the doctoral project.

Main Body

John and Charles Wesley, A Brief Context

John Wesley's name is synonymous with his brother Charles Wesley considering the brothers had a very close relationship. Moreover, one cannot speak of Methodism and the worldwide revival that was ignited without conveying the contributions of the Wesleys inclusively. John Whitehead paints a picture for us whereby he asserts that the Wesleys rose to public notoriety, from the bosom of a family which had long been venerable for Christian knowledge and piety. John Wesley, he writes, was the second son (of eight children at the time of his birth) born to Samuel and Susannah Wesley, at Epworth in Lincolnshire on the 17th of June 1703.[7]

[7] Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley,* 231.

John's father Samuel was the Rector of Epworth, and there is no evidence that any of the boys were ever sent to school in the country. Nevertheless, they along with their siblings received the first rudiments of learning from their mother. Considering Susannah Wesley had a very bad opinion about the common methods of governing and instructing children, she was not only attentive to their progress in learning; she likewise endeavored to give them, as early as possible, just and useful notions of religion.[8] Whitehead provides that Susannah Wesley seemed to be led to give more than ordinary attention towards John Wesley at one time writing in one of her private meditations; when he was nearly eight years of age, she mentions him in a manner that shows how much her heart was engaged in forming his mind for religion. According to the meditation, Mrs. Wesley wrote:

> Evening May 17, 1711. Son John.
>
> What shall I render to the Lord for all his mercies? The little unworthy praise I can offer, is so mean and contemptible an offering, that I am even ashamed to tender it. But, Lord, accept it for the sake of Christ, and pardon the deficiency of the sacrifice.
>
> I would offer thee myself, and all that thou hast given me; and I would resolve, O give me grace to do it, that the residue of my life shall be all devoted to thy service. And I do intend to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child, that thou has so mercifully provided for, than ever I have been; that I may do my endeavor to instill into his mind the principles of thy true religion, and virtue. Lord give me grace to do it sincerely and prudently and bless my attempts with good success.[9]

We can presuppose that the dedication of Mrs. Wesley's attention towards John, affectionately known as "Jack" in this meditation, is probably driven by her gratitude for the fact that the Lord saved young Jack's life several years earlier when the family's

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[8] Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley,* 234.

[9] Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley,* 234.

home caught fire in the middle of the night. The account of this event in summary suggests that Jack's seven siblings (including Charles), the maid, and both his parents were able to make it out of the house blazing with fire. Once outside they realized that young Jack was still in the house and that time was running out as the flames continued to spread, making it difficult to get back in. Upon realizing that there was no way to get back into the blazing house, the family patriarch Samuel Wesley in agony began to commend his son's soul to God, thinking they had lost him.

Conversely, John's account of the events that took place asserts that while he was trapped in a burning chamber, he had enough wherewithal to climb upon a chest that stood near the window, and someone in the yard saw him and proposed running to fetch a ladder. Wesley says that another person answered, 'there will not be time…I will fix myself against the wall: lift a light man and set him on my shoulders.' They did so, and the man pulled young Wesley through the window. Wesley confirms that just as they were pulling him through the window, the roof fell in.[10] Therefore, we can presume perhaps that Mrs. Wesley's manner of more than ordinary attention towards her son, as Whitehead suggests, was likely driven by a conviction in her heart that the Almighty God saved young Jack for a purpose that was far greater than she or her husband could ever imagine.

John would go on to excel in his education, as two of his personal biographers, Dr. Thomas Coke and Mr. Henry Moore document in their account of John Wesley's life. He seems to have been impressed with sentiments of religion at a very early age; and

[10] Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley,* 232-233.

partook of the Lord's Supper when he was only eight years old.[11] Coke and Moore indicate that Mr. Wesley was placed at the Charter-House in London at a very young age, under that eminent scholar, Dr. Walker, with whom he soon became a favorite on account of his sobriety and application. Furthermore, Coke and Moore's contributions inform readers that John Wesley was given strict discipline (at the command of his father) for running around the Charter-House Garden three times every morning, which was a rather large space, to maintain discipline for staying healthy.

Coke and Moore assert that John Wesley's work and discipline at the Charter-House would open the door for him to be moved to Christ Church College, Oxford, where he completed the degree of Bachelor of Arts. In 1724, he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, and two years after this he took completed the degree of Master of Arts.[12] He was ordained in The Church of England in the year 1725, by Dr. Potter, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, and preached his first sermon at South Lye, near Oxford.[13] At twenty-three years old in the year 1725, Wesley encountered Bishop Taylor's "Rules and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying," while at Oxford, which would impact the trajectory of his life. Wesley says "In reading several parts of this book, I was exceedingly affected: that part in particular which relates to *purity of intention.* Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God: all my thoughts, and words, and actions being

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[11] Thomas Coke and Henry Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. Including An Account of the Great Revival of Religion, in Europe and America of Which He Was the First and Chief Instrument* (London, UK: G. Paramore, 1792), 41-42.

[12] Coke and Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, 42.

[13] Coke and Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley,* 47.

thoroughly convinced, there was no medium: but that every part of my life (not some only), must be either a sacrifice to God, or myself, that is, in effect, to the devil."[14]

Moreover, possessing a voracious enthusiasm for reading, John Wesley says that an encounter with a book titled, *Kemp's Christian Pattern: The Nature and Extent of Inward Religion*, as it relates to the religion of the heart, appeared to him in a stronger light than it had ever done before. His conception of the literature convinced Wesley of a conviction that giving all his life to God also required him to give God all of his heart. A year or two later, Wesley's spiritual formation would be fascinated yet again by Mr. Law's *Christian Perfection and Serious Call,* grounding him in an understanding of the absolute impossibility of being half a Christian, by which he determined through God's grace to be all devoted to God, giving all his soul, body, and substance.[15]

Charles Wesley was born December 18, 1708, at Epworth in Lincolnshire, and was about five years younger than John and sixteen years younger than the eldest son, Samuel. "He appeared dead rather than alive when he was born. He did not cry, nor open his eyes, and was kept wrapt up in soft wool until the time when he should have been born according to the usual course of nature, and then he opened his eyes and cried."[16]

Like his other siblings, Charles received the first rudiments of learning at home, under the pious care of his mother. In 1716, he was sent to Westminster school, and placed under the care of his eldest brother Samuel Wesley, a high churchman, who educated him in his own principles until 1721 when Charles was admitted a scholar at St.

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[14] Coke and Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley,* 41-42.

[15] Coke and Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley,* 52-53.

[16] The spelling of this word reflects the original documentation provided in 18th century English linguistical form by Dr. Thomas Coke and Mr. Henry Moore.

Peter's College, Westminster. He was now a King's scholar; and as he advanced in age and learning, he acted dramas, and at length became captain of the school. By 1726, he was elected to Christ Church, Oxford, at which time his brother John was a Fellow at Lincoln College. According to John Wesley's account of his younger brother's arrival at Oxford, he asserts, "He pursued his studies diligently, and led a regular harmless life: but if I spoke to him about religion, he would warmly answer, 'What, would you have me to be a saint all at once?' and would hear no more."[17]

Origins and Birth of the Methodist Movement

John Wesley says "I was then near three years my father's curate. During most of this time he [Charles] continued much the same; but in the year 1729 I observed his letters grew much more serious, and when I returned to Oxford in November that year, I found him in great earnestness to save his soul."[18] After losing himself in diversions during his first year at Christ Church, Charles affirms that he set himself to study in the next year, and his diligence led him to serious thinking. Ultimately, he began attending weekly sacrament and persuaded two or three young students to accompany him as they observed the method of study prescribed by the statutes of the university. Charles proposes that this discipline gained him the harmless name of Methodist. Whitehead suggests that Charles Wesley became increasingly more serious as he began to exhibit diligence in the means of grace and in his studies. Moreover, Charles' spiritual formation

[17] Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley,* 71-72.

[18] Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, 71-72.

was impacted so that he endeavored to awaken attention to religion in the minds of some of the students.[19]

Previously, I examined the titles behind some of the most critical texts that began to reshape John Wesley's theology; to juxtapose Charles' formation, Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore suggest that John's spiritual formation continued to be shaped to which point John learned from a "serious man" along his journey that he could not serve God alone. On the contrary, he was charged to find companions to serve God or make them; bearing in mind that his convictions led him to subscribe to the school of thought that the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion. Therefore, upon returning to the University at Oxford, his first recruit was his younger brother Charles Wesley, who inspired the Wesleys to invite Mr. Moore, Mr. Hervey, Mr. Whitehead, and others into study. Thus, John began gathering companions around studying divinity on Sunday evenings, while studying the Greek and Latin classics on other nights.[20] Examining the accounts of the Wesleys across the scholarly work of Whitehead, Coke, and Moore, it is obvious that John Wesley was much farther in his spiritual formation and convictions than the younger Wesley. Even still, the text gives Charles the title of the first Methodist in light of his zestfulness for gathering two to three other students before John's return to Oxford, to come together for a strict method of study and religious duties, allotting as little as possible to sleeping and eating, and as much as possible to devotion; seeking true holiness.

According to John Fletcher Hurst, Charles Wesley and his friends' precise regularity caused a young gentleman of Christ Church to say derisively, "Here is a new

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[19] Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley,* 71-72.

[20] Coke and Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley,* 53-54.

set of Methodists sprung up." More importantly, Charles Wesley and his friends were conforming to the method of study prescribed by the university. While the term Methodist ultimately snowballed into a mainstream Protestant Movement that has swept around the world (today boasting some eighty sects of Methodist, Wesleyan, and related Uniting Reformations of Methodism), the youths endured the jokes about names such as Methodist, Bible Bigots, Bible Moths, Sacramentarians (due to weekly attendance at Sacraments), Supererogation Men, and 'The Holy Club.'[21]

The Oxford Holy Club: What was it? Why was it so Impactful?

An invitation to prayer, Bible study, worship, and weekly partaking of the sacraments, per Charles Wesley's initial call to his friends, became even more organized under John Wesley's leadership. 'The Holy Club' was a title according to the work of Dr. John Fletcher Hurst, that was used not to jeer and humiliate or cast opprobrium, as they thought, but really to confer honor upon a perfectly inoffensive band of young men who only desired to be what they and their opponents desired alike called Christians.[22]

Upon returning to Oxford, John Wesley assumed leadership of the band formed by his brother, and Fletcher asserts that his age, genius for generalship, position in the university, and superior learning made this a matter of course. Nonetheless, even as Charles rejoiced in John's acceptance of providing leadership to the group, the elder often spoke of the work which was being done as their joint work. Charles was to take his full

[21] John Fletcher Hurst, *John Wesley the Methodist: A Plain account of His Life and Work,* ed. James Richard Joy (New York, NY: Eaton and Mains, 1903), 68-69.

[22] Hurst, *John Wesley the Methodist,* 69.

share in the great revival, not only as a poet but as a preacher. Even still, John was nicknamed "The Curator of the Holy Club," or sometimes, "The Father of the Holy Club."[23] The first work of the Holy Club was the study of the Bible. The new movement was spiritual and humanitarian, but first and strongest of all, scriptural. The searching of the scriptures was earnest, open-minded, devout, and unceasing. John Wesley himself said, "From the very beginning—from the time that four young men united together—each of them was *homo unius libri;* a man of one book…And indeed, unto this day, it is their constant endeavor to think and speak as the oracles of God."[24] John's joint leadership with his brother Charles led to the development of a society at Oxford that grew exponentially and became the foundation for their work beyond Christ Church, Oxford. However, it is critical to understand on a deeper level that some other contextual factors made such an impact possible.

Therefore, let us briefly and more narrowly examine a historical piece of literature that had a profound impact on the framework of John Wesley's religious societies, classes, and bands. In that the date of publication of the book, *The Country Parson's Advice to His Parishioners,* is suggestive and the author unknown, we will turn to an earlier account of religious meetings influenced by Dr. Anthony Horneck and Mr. Smithies about the year 1678, during the reign of King Charles II.[25] Dr. Horneck's influence commanded the meetings of several young men in London who were seeking to

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[23] Hurst, *John Wesley the Methodist*, 69-70.

[24] Hurst, *John Wesley the Methodist*, 69-70.

[25] John S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* (London, UK: The Epworth Press, 1955, originally 1921), 10.

lead a holy life. While they only met once a week, their meetings consisted of applying themselves to good discourse and to things wherein they might edify one another.[26]

Dr. Simon suggests that this book, *The Country Parson's Advice to His Parishioners* appears two years after the commencement of Dr. Horneck's meetings. If this is true, then we can presuppose that John Wesley was aware of the existence of the Religious Societies that Dr. Anthony Horneck had previously established in the late seventeenth century during the reign of King Charles II. That said, let us take a closer look at Horneck's methods and school of thought for constructing these Religious Societies.

A great deal of indebtedness and gratitude is owed to respected scholar and theologian Dr. Josiah Woodward (1657-1712), a devout clergyman and moral reformer of the Church of England known for his advocacy of adherence to Christian moral ethic. One of Dr. Woodward's major works was titled *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in London.*[27]

Woodward's work provided a pathway for understanding the affinities that exist between the early Religious and Methodist societies. Simon suggests that Dr. Woodward served as an adviser to the early societies, and even drew up the rules for the regulation of the meetings.[28] Woodward says,

> The benefit of Dr. Horneck's Awakening Sermons, and the Morning Lectures on the Lord's Day in Cornhil, preached by Mr. Smithies, (chiefly designed for the Instruction of Youth) having occasioned much of this happy Work upon the Spirits of these young men; they did more particularly apply themselves to these

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[26] Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies,* 10.

[27] Josiah Woodward, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in London* (London, UK: J.D., 1698).

[28] Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 10.

> Divines for Direction, who had been Instruments in the Hand of God for their Conviction.[29]

According to Woodward, "it was advised that they should meet together once a week," due to the regularity and commitment of these young men to confer with Horneck and other ministers on the application of Divine direction to live a Holy life.[30] Their commitment to the rules ultimately led to a myriad of fruitful accomplishments in their Spiritual lives and the lives of those around them. Faithfulness to their meetings and rules (per advice) led to intentional consideration of the wants of the poor, which in time led to such considerable sums that they lent assistance to many poor families, helped some poor people find a trade suitable to their capacities, set sundry prisoners at liberty, financially enabled some poor scholars at the University, and maintained several orphans, with many other good works.[31]

Similarly, in my studies, I have learned much about the contributions of the Methodist societies to the poor, as evidenced by John Wesley's passion and charge to pursue the needs and desires of the poor. Methodism, according to Dr. Robert Owens, serves as the wellspring in which the outgrowth of other societies or organizations would be rooted, namely the Holiness, Pentecostal, and other Charismatic Movements.[32] Subsequently, it is critical to offer tribute to the influence of Horneck's *Religious Societies* (as organized within the Church of England) on John Wesley. Horneck's

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[29] Josiah Woodward, *An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies in London* (London, UK: J.D., 1698), 35. As spelled by Dr. Woodward himself. Probably an abbreviation in light of many of the other words that are abbreviated in his writings.

[30] Woodward, *An Account of the Rise and Progress*, 35.

[31] Woodward, *An Account of the Rise and Progress*, 36.

[32] Robert R. Owens, *Speak to the Rock: The Azusa Street Revival, Its Roots and Its Message* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998), 30.

Religious Societies reveal the deeper roots of the Wesleys' methods and convictions in the organization of the Holy Club at Oxford; including the prescriptions of Christ Church, Oxford that Charles Wesley and the others initially honored as a precursor to what became the Holy Club at Oxford, Wesley's Societies, Classes, and Bands, which ultimately formulate the core of the Methodist Movement.

John Wesley's Small Group Models – Societies:

As I further examine the significant contribution of Dr. Horneck's Religious Societies to the broader context of Methodism, and some of the affinities that exist between them; please understand that it is critical to be aware that John Wesley's context was in his desire to stay within the guidelines of the Anglican church (Church of England). Nonetheless, my criticism here is not with Wesley, as it is more with the lack of tribute regarding Methodist societies given to the foundations that provided the framework for Wesley and the organization of his societies. That said, let us move toward examining more closely the rules that John Wesley adopted and revised for the sake of his societies, juxtaposing those that were drawn up first for the Religious Societies of the Anglican Church.

I will begin with the rules of accountability prescribed by Woodward and Horneck according to Richard Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells, drawn up in the late seventeenth century for the purpose of members and/or persons seeking to enter the Religious Society.[33] The rules were as follows:

1. That all that entered into such a Society should resolve upon an holy and serious Life.

[33] Richard Kidder, *The Life of the Reverend Anthony Horneck… Richard Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells* (London, UK: J.H. for B. Aylmer at the Three Pigeons in Cornhill, 1968), 13-16.

2. That no person shall be admitted into this Society till he arrive at the age of Sixteen, and hath been first confirmed by the Bishop and solemnly taken on himself his Baptismal vow.
3. That they choose a Minister of the Church of England to direct them.
4. That they shall not be allowed in their meetings to discourse of any controverted point of Divinity.
5. Neither shall they discourse of the Government of Church or State.
6. That in their meetings they use no Prayers but those of the Church, such as the Litany and Collects, and other prescribed Prayers, but still they shall not use any that peculiarly belongs to the Minister, as the Absolution.
7. That the Minister whom they choose shall direct what practical divinity shall be read at these meetings.
8. That they may have liberty, after Prayer and Reading, to sing a Psalm.
9. That after all is done, if there be time left, they may discourse each other about their spiritual concerns; but this shall not be a standing exercise, which any shall be obliged to attend unto.
10. That one day in the week be appointed for this meeting, for such as cannot come on the Lord's Day, and that he that absents himself without cause shall pay three pence to the box.
11. Every time they meet, everyone shall give six pence to the box.
12. That on a certain day in the year, viz. Whitsun-Tuesday, two Stewards shall be chosen and a moderate dinner provided, and a sermon preached, and the money distributed (necessary charges deducted) to the poor.
13. A book shall be bought, in which these orders shall be written.
14. None shall be admitted into this Society without the consent of the Minister who presides over it, and no apprentice shall be capable of being chosen.
15. That if any case of conscience arise, it shall be brought before the Minister.
16. If any member think fit to leave the Society, he shall pay five shillings to the Stock.
17. The major part of the Society to conclude the rest.
18. The following Rules are more especially to be commended to the members of this Society, viz. To love one another: When reviled, not to revile again: To speak evil of no man: To wrong no man: To pray, if possible, seven times a day: To keep close to the Church of England: To transact all things peaceably and gently: To be helpful to each other: To use themselves to holy thoughts in their coming in and going out: To examine themselves every night: To give every one their due: To obey superiors both Spiritual and Temporal.[34]

These are the orders that members of the earliest societies conformed to. Scholars suggest that the orders varied widely according to the context of the society wherein the

[34] Kidder, *The Life of the Reverend Anthony Horneck*, 13-16. As it was spelled in the literary context of the era.

orders were produced.[35] Within this same framework of accountability to the societies, John Wesley's journal compromised societal orders as adopted from Woodward and Horneck as a means of accountability beyond gathering for a time of Bible study, prayer, or sharing of personal experiences, including:

1. THAT they will meet together once in a Week to confess their Faults one to another, and to pray for one another that they may be healed.
2. That the Persons desirous to meet together for that Purpose, be divided into several Bands, or little Societies.
3. That every one in order speak as freely, plainly, and concisely as he can, the real State of his Heart, with his several Temptations and Deliverances, since the last Time of meeting.
4. That all Bands have a Conference at eight every Wednesday Evening, begun and ended with Singing and Prayer.
5. That any who desire to be admitted into this Society, be asked, What are your Reasons for desiring this? Will you be entirely open, using no Kind of Reserve, least of all, in the Case of Love or Courtship? Will you strive against the Desire of ruling, of being first in your Company, or having your own Way? Have you any Objections to any of our Orders? The Orders may then be read to them.
6. That every one then present speak clearly and fully whatever Objection he has to any Person proposed to be a Member.
7. That those against whom no reasonable Objection appears or remains, be, in order for their Trial, formed into distinct Bands, and some Person agreed on to assist them.
8. That if no new Objection then appear, they be, after two Months Trial, admitted into the Society.
9. That every fourth Saturday be observed as a Day of general Intercession, which may continue from twelve to two, from three to five, and from six to eight.
10. That on Sunday Se'en-night following be a general Love-feast, from seven till ten in the Evening.
    That no particular Person be allowed to act in any Thing contrary to any Order of this Society, but that every one, without Distinction, submit to the Determination of his Brethren; and that if any Person or Persons do not, after being thrice admonished conform to the Society, they be not esteemed any longer as Members.[36]

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[35] Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies,* 39.

[36] Daniel Benham, *Memoirs of James Hutton: Comprising the Annals of His Life, and Connection With The United Brethren* (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co. 1856), 29-32. The meeting in Fetter-lane denotes an exhaustive version of the orders agreed upon for this society. Here I have only provided the Rules from Wesley's journal. Please see footnote in Simon's *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* (London, UK: Brill, 1955), 198.

The version of the rules provided in Daniel Benham's *Memoirs of James Hutton* represent those agreed upon for the Religious Society meeting in Fetter-lane on May 1st, 1738.[37] This list of orders is far more exhaustive than the previous list of orders noted in Wesley's journal. In comparison, the Orders of the Fetter Lane Society with those of the Horneck and Woodward Societies inform one immediate difference there is no rule that confines membership in the new Society to those who belong to the Church of England. Additionally, some scholars think it is amazing to witness the careful detail given to the inclusion or exclusion of members to the Societies old and new.[38]

Bands: Another noticeable difference is that the latter list of rules contained regulations for the establishment of bands and the appointment of their leaders. The purpose of the bands was to promote spiritual fellowship; consistent with conversations regarding personal religious experiences that had their place in the older Societies and were discouraged in newer Societies.[39] In their book, *The Band Meeting: Rediscovering Relational Discipleship in Transformational Community*, Drs. Kevin Watson and Scott Kisker assert band meetings consist of a small group (of about five people; gender or marital-orientated) to help people connect well with God and others. In these groups historically, people confessed sin to each other in order to grow in holiness. They named the places of deepest brokenness, where they found that sin was in control of them and they were, in their own striving, powerless over it.[40]

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[37] Benham, *Memoirs of James Hutton,* 29.

[38] Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies,* 198-199.

[39] Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies,* 198-199.

[40] Kevin M. Watson and Scott T. Kisker, *The Band Meeting: Rediscovering Relational Discipleship in Transformational Community* (Nashville, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2017), 12.

Bands were introduced as an integral part of the larger society's structure, as Dr. David Watson suggests; however, the bands had limitations, which began to emerge quite clearly once Methodist preaching took to the fields. Even John Wesley noted that weekly mutual confession declined as many new members were slipping back into their old way of life and leaving the societies. Through the lens of modern research into small group dynamics, David Watson further proposes that an informed judgment can be made on the premise of cultural and spiritual disjunction.[41] The bands, patterned after a Moravian community life that was refined and sequestered, were too much too soon for ordinary working people. Watson suggests here that the pressing need for these new society members was not how to deepen their faith. Rather, it was how to hang on to whatever faith they had and how to live by it in the world.

Classes

Dr. Hurst affirms that the organization of class meetings was discovered amidst Wesley's concern about not being able to see the behavior of each person in his neighborhood, and several walkers did much hurt within the community before Mr. Wesley was apprised of it.[42] While it is not clear what is meant by a walker, it is apparent that they caused disruptions within societies. The result of thinking through ways to address the matter exposed the method of the class meeting that was first adopted at Bristol in 1742. Contextually speaking, there was a large debt remaining on the New

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[41] David Lowes Watson, *Covenant Discipleship: Christian Formation Through Mutual Accountability* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1991), 29-30.

[42] John Fletcher Hurst, *John Wesley the Methodist: A Plain Account of His Life and Work,* ed. James Richard Joy (New York, NY: Eaton & Mains, 1903), 123-24.

Room (meetinghouse) built in the Bristol "Horsefair" three years before, and Wesley called together the principal men for consultation. Wesley's primary question to the council was, "How should the debts be paid?" Captain Foy, a layman, suggested that every member of the community give a penny a week until the debt is paid.

However, the problem with Foy's suggestion was that many of them were poor and could not afford it. Therefore, Foy's counter-suggestion was to put eleven of the poorest in his class; if they could give, he would call on them to do so. If they could not give, he would give a penny for them and one for himself to cover the cost. Furthermore, Foy's charge to the counsel of laymen was to call on eleven of their neighbors to do the same. John Wesley then responded, "Done." As a result, they found people not living as they ought, which confirmed for Wesley and the counsel that this method was the very thing they needed to implement for the sake of accountable discipleship. The financial problem was solved by Captain Foy and the spiritual welfare of every member was quickened in Wesley as a result of discovering this new initiative.[43] Dr. David Watson affirms that class meetings were a supportive structure for discipleship, grounded in the realities of daily living in the world, and undergirded by common sense.

Conclusion

John Wesley and his brother Charles managed to revolutionize the Christian world through their passion and desire to live and extend an invitation to others to live in a life grounded in Holiness. The Wesleys hail from a family that already possessed a very deep sense of piety for an intimate relationship with God and service to his church.

[43] Hurst, *John Wesley the Methodist*, 123-124.

Therefore, this greater sense of piety was imparted to them and their siblings from a very early age, and with this foundation in mind, it should not come as a surprise to any who studies the lives of the brothers that they eventually became trailblazers for spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ around the world.

From their early days, it is plain to see that their pathways to ministry were divinely orchestrated, and their commitment to religion was fostered by their convictions for the need to earnestly seek to live a life that was more dedicated to God. For Charles Wesley this took some time, considering he did not want to be a "saint all at once," as he often retorted to his brother John whenever questioned about where he was in his walk with Christ. Nevertheless, as the brothers matriculated through Christ Church, Oxford, and beyond, my analysis helped us to witness the transformation that took place in their lives through a very narrow lens. Their time at Oxford helps us to gain a greater understanding of the events that took place prior to the official formation of the Methodist movement that spread like wildfire.

In conclusion, the topic of my doctoral project proposes a requisite synergy between Journey of Faith Church-Humble and myself that insists on the need to develop a discipleship plan that invites people from the earliest stages and various walks of life to engage in a cycle of spiritual formation and discipleship making. Thus, a close examination of John Wesley's accomplishments and the key figures who surrounded him is necessary to the foundation of this doctoral project; considering Journey of Faith lacks a viable tool for measuring the effectiveness of its mission to "Make Disciples for Jesus Christ."

The effectiveness of the Wesley's 'Holy Club at Oxford which served as the precursor to the formation of widespread Wesleyan societies is evidence of the need for a small group model to be implemented into the context of Journey of Faith. The Wesleys produced two additional small group models from the historical religious societies model they revitalized at Oxford. *Class Meetings* and *Band Meetings* were ingenious models that grew out of the societies developed to create a smaller gathering to encourage more intimate sharing and accountability. However, a decision must be made regarding which of the two small group models will be more effective within the context of Journey of Faith in the development of the anticipated Dmin project.

Lastly, in consideration of the statistics of our mission field exclusively within the 77396 area code, concerning the growing chasm of people that are withdrawing from the Church, faith, and belief in God (YHWH), MissionInsite.com reports that 35.1% (34.5% US Avg.) of the residents in the area do not believe in God, 41.2% (35.4% US Avg.) have abandoned their previous belief in God, 42.5% (43.1% US Avg.) are unsure about personal beliefs, and a whopping 47.1% (45.7% US Avg) say faith is not relevant to their lives. Additionally, 64.4% (63.2% US Avg) refuse to participate in church because they do not feel welcomed. As a result of this historical analysis of the Wesleys, I suspect that implementation of the proper tool for measuring the growth of disciples will present data that will impact the spiritual maturity of its context personally and community-wide.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The project anticipates reimagining and cultivating disciple-making as the culture of the ministry context to get back to the core of Christ's invitation. I suspect that a proper disciple-making model will reshape the ministry context. The problem in the ministry context is that roughly eighty-five to ninety percent of the members of Journey of Faith do not attend Bible Study or small groups. There is a lack of response to engaging in these spiritual formation opportunities. The lack thereof leaves one pondering whether members view their spiritual formation through the lens of optional over obligation. Exegetically, Matthew 4:18-22 informs a model for discipling that thematically underscores a theology for the necessity of developing a culture of ongoing discipleship. The text does not stop at being sought after or found by Jesus on this journey of life, and it is not just enough to accept the invitation (salvation) to become a disciple of Jesus. On the contrary, the text highlights an invitation to walk with him, learn from him, and imitate him while reaching others for him.

In this chapter, I will explore whether one can successfully reach another for Jesus Christ if said person is not proactively doing the necessary work to get to know Jesus for themselves. Furthermore, I will explore the thoughts and strategies of multiple scholars to confirm whether a disciple's growth can hinge solely upon attending Sunday morning

worship. German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer articulates a stance regarding the call to discipleship as an adherent disciple to Jesus Christ that the author appreciates. "When we are called to follow Christ, we are summoned to an exclusive attachment to his person. The grace of his call bursts all the bonds of legalism."[1] In light of this, Christ calls the disciple to follow grace and commandment in one. Bonhoeffer warns, "An abstract Christology, a doctrinal system, a general religious knowledge on the subject of grace or the forgiveness of sins, render discipleship superfluous, and they positively exclude any idea of discipleship whatever and are essentially inimical to the whole conception of following Christ."[2]

With an abstract idea, it is possible to enter a relation of formal knowledge, to become enthusiastic about it, and perhaps even to put it into practice; it can never be followed in personal obedience. Therefore, I will examine and engage in a theological discourse that is focused on some key tenets of discipleship culture including Christology, embodying servant leadership, and empowerment through the Holy Spirit.

First and foremost, if the community of faith is to effectively develop a culture of discipleship laity must move beyond initial acceptance of the invitation into discipleship (salvation) and commit (daily) to cultivate a Christological pedagogy. However, I was curious whether laity in the ministry context feel it is difficult to follow anyone or a movement without making a personal investment into knowing said person or movement. The Gospel message is clear that Jesus was very intentional from a social perspective to engage with the disciples' formation as they followed him. Therefore, I will attempt to

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[1] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The Call to Discipleship," in *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1959), 48-50.

[2] Bonhoeffer, "The Call to Discipleship," 48-50.

examine Christology across the disciple's need to know, Jesus. What Jesus did? How Jesus did it?

Secondly, I will investigate the need to embody servant leadership as a means of developing a discipleship culture. The discussion seeks to draw from the well of theological scholarship concerning embodying servant leadership that encompasses an active commitment to studying the life of Jesus in community with others, engaging in social activities that nurture our common bond with Jesus Christ while doing life together as Jesus did with his disciples and reaching others with an invitation to follow Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, the whole of this theological examination must be rooted within the context of an understanding that one's growth and development as disciples of Jesus Christ necessitates being empowered through the Holy Spirit. I will embark on an investigation into the life of a disciple empowered by the Holy Spirit to supernaturally live out their passions and convictions to the word, work, and ministry of Jesus. Thus, I will examine two components of the Holy Spirit: Our need to let the Holy Spirit work, in that it is critical to release all control of our lives to the hands of the Holy Spirit, and identifying the evidence of the Holy Spirit's power at work in us and through us. I will explore the impact of the believer's growth in relationship with Christ through the Holy Spirit. This relationship helps to prioritize the matters of the Kingdom and live into Matthew 6:33 as our obligation juxtaposed, reducing our obligation to the matters of the Kingdom as another option.

Therefore, I suspect that the intersection between gaining a Christological awareness, embodying that awareness through the work of the Holy Spirit in our personal

lives and in community with others as His followers represent three key components that are theologically essential to the development of a discipling culture within the corpus of the community of faith. If this is true, I will argue that the believing community can begin to form a framework for communal transformation within our churches that will spill over into the community.

Main Body

To effectively develop a culture of discipleship within the context of the local church that overflows into the community and ultimately around the world, I suspect that it is critical to move beyond our initial acceptance of the invitation into discipleship (or our soteriological commitment) by committing (daily) to cultivate a Christological pedagogy. In his book, *Crucified God*, German scholar, Jürgen Moltmann suggests, "The Christian life of theologians, churches and human beings is faced more than ever today with a double crisis: the crisis of relevance and the crisis of identity."[3] Moltmann says, "These two crises are complementary. The more theology and the church attempt to become relevant to the problems of the present day, the more deeply they are drawn into the crisis of their own Christian identity."[4] Moltmann's school of thought informs a prescription of understanding centered on the idea that the more Christians attempt to assert their identity in traditional dogmas, rights, and moral notions, the more irrelevant and unbelievable they become.

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[3] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: 40th Anniversary Edition* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 2.

[4] Moltmann, *The Crucified God: 40th Anniversary Edition*, 2.

In *Christology: A Guide for the Perplexed,* Alan J. Spence asserts, "The pronouncement that Jesus had been elevated to a position of authority at the right hand of God was confirmed by their (the believing community) own dramatic experience of the Spirit, a token for them of his present enthronement in heaven."[5] Within the framework of this contextual interpretation Spence further asserts, "Once Jesus was perceived by the believing community in this light and elevated to a position of divine status in its worship, the Church found itself facing, even as it continues to face today, a whole host of complex and baffling questions about his person."[6] There is a thread of correspondence between Spence's insights and that of Moltmann's disposition that seems to identify the challenge for the Church with each new era.

Nevertheless, the believer from generation to generation must come to Jesus with a curiosity and commitment to learning more about him. Then believers can cultivate a firm disposition that is apologetic within the framework of a cosmos that desires to drive Christianity into the corner of irrelevance and disbelief as Moltmann said. For this reason, I assert there is a clarion call for Christians (that is potential converts, recent converts, long-time converts, etc.) everywhere to draw near to the risen Savior. We must be intentionally proactive about learning all we can about Jesus, living out His Word, and reaching others for Him. Moreover, I subscribe to the idea that we accomplish this by faith, trusting and believing what the Holy One chooses to reveal Himself to us as we actively seek and pursue relationship with Him.

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[5] Alan J. Spence, *Christology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T and T Clark, 2008), 6-7.

[6] Spence, *Christology: A Guide for the Perplexed,* 6-7.

Christology, according to Alan J. Spence's, can be described as the "faltering attempt of the Church to provide a coherent conceptual and theological explanation of Jesus' person, in harmony with the scriptural testimony, which can account for his role in its worship and faith."[7] I suggest that it is generally difficult to follow anyone without getting to know them, and Jesus was very intentional from a social perspective to engage with his disciples following his initial invitation. Considering this, Spence proposes an understanding of Christology as "a distinct discipline from one (the believer) which seeks to show why Jesus is indeed worthy of the status that the Church (His Bride) ascribes to him. Its primary concern is not to persuade the agnostic that Jesus is the promised Messiah or to marshal evidence in support of Jesus' divinity for those who are yet to be convinced."[8] In Spence, we find an affirmation by the Church that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, whether the world believes or not.

As Jesus' disciples, our identity is and must be grounded by our understanding of Jesus Christ and His presence in our lives to face the challenges of the world around us with assurance of who we are and who we are. According to Jesus' invitation to Simon (called Peter), Andrew, James, and John in our foundational pericope (Matt. 4:18-22, NRSV), we receive an urgent call from Jesus to follow and learn by listening, watching, and imitating Him. Thus, through the lens of theological responsibility I assert that effective discipleship growth for all disciples of Jesus Christ mandates the need to engage a pedagogical Christology located in three criterions: who Jesus is, what Jesus did, and how Jesus did it?

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[7] Spence, *Christology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 6-7.

[8] Spence, *Christology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 6-7.

Who Jesus Is?

Author, founder, and Director of *The Food Pantry* and Director of Ministry at St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco, California, Sara Miles, in her book *Jesus Freak* writes:

> There is no other authority on earth we have to wait for, no permission we need in order to act on his words. All it takes to be a Jesus freak is to follow him…I tasted Jesus before I read about him and turned back to Scripture for clues about what I'd already experienced in my own body.[9]

Miles indicates that regardless of Jesus Christ's intersection with our lives, there is a need to turn our attentions and affections towards scripture to learn more. Miles says:

> The tales about Jesus only gain significance in repetition, gain depth and breadth as they resound through different readers, are stuttered, or proclaimed in a million different voices…. Here's what I hear: Jesus is the Word made flesh. While he lived among us, what he said and what he did were the same thing. His human body was God's language, as much as his human speech.[10]

Literary scholar and theologian, C. S. Lewis' disposition solidifies Miles' assertion on the need for believers alike to turn back to scripture in his introduction to St. Athanasius the Great of Alexandria's historical piece, *On the Incarnation*, as C.S. Lewis asserts:

> Finally, having explored the relationship between the Word of God and created reality, Athanasius can insist that the Word of God belongs to the divine realm: Jesus Christ is Himself what it is to be God. Created beings, brought into being from non-existence, are intrinsically "from outside" external to God, though they can come to participate in God. The Son, on the other hand, is God's "own" Word, and so is divine, not by participation, but in Himself. His holy disciples teach that everything was created through Him and for Him, and that being a good offspring of a good Father, and true Son. He is the Power of the Father and His wisdom and word; not so by participation, nor do these properties accrue to Him and are given wisdom by Him, being strong and rational in Him; but He is wisdom, word, power, light, truth, righteousness, virtue, the stamp, effulgence and

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[9] Sara Miles, *Jesus Freak: Feeding, Healing, Raising the Dead* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), xx-1.

[10] Sara Miles, *Jesus Freak: Feeding, Healing, Raising the Dead*, 2.

> image. In short, Jesus is the supremely perfect fruit of the Father, and is alone Son, the exact image of the Father (Gent. 46)."[11]

Within the framework of C. S. Lewis and St. Athanasius' words, we find treasures that every human being should affirm boldly when rising out of the ashes of death to sin into the promise of life eternal as disciples who receive salvation through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Simply because knowing Jesus Christ affirms the purpose for living out our call to declare the good news of Jesus as did the holy disciples.

What Jesus Did?

Furthermore, the obligation of our journey into knowing Jesus as the Divine One-in-Himself not only informs our conversion; it also marks the beginning of an opportunity to learn about what Jesus did. Our Christological pedagogy as followers of Jesus is expanded by looking at the ministerial works Jesus performed during His earthly life and ministry. Jesus' life and ministry represent the paradigm for social reform in the ancient context. As the catalyst of social teaching, Jesus imparted to His disciples, verbally and in action, His compassion for confronting the social issues of the day, including the systems of injustice and inequality. In Matthew 25:34-40, NRSV, Jesus outlines the focus of His works as part of His eschatological agenda saying:

> Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you…And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

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[11] Saint Athanasius, *On the Incarnation,* trans. John Behr (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 32-33.

According to Julie Hanlon Rubio, in the book *Jesus Christ: The New Face of Social Progress*, Catholic social teaching is celebrated for bringing the attention of Catholic men and women of goodwill to the reality of injustice and calling them to work for a better world. On issues as diverse as war, economics, health care, the environment, human rights, capital punishment, racism, sexism, and the rights of families, popes and bishops exhort readers to take their place in a tradition that, from the prophets of the Hebrew Bible to Jesus of Nazareth, links belief in God to action for justice.[12] Rubio suggests, "There is seemingly a distance from principles of love beyond the social teaching of the Catholic Church to bring forward principles of human dignity, respect for life, association, participation, the option for the poor, solidarity, stewardship of creation, subsidiarity, equality, and the common good."[13] In Familiaris Consortio, the late Pope John Paul II wrote, "Creating the human race in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental vocation of every human being."[14]

When admonishing every member of Methodism to free any and every slave in their possession, John Wesley not only wrote letters to slave owners; he insisted a hard stance against slavery in that he advocated for social holiness located on the premise of

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[12] Peter J. Casarella, ed., *Jesus Christ: The New Face of Social Progress* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), 95-96.

[13] Casarella, *Jesus Christ: The New Face of Social Progress,* 95-96.

[14] Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1981), no. 11. Translation at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio_en.html.

creation and redemption in his sermon, *On Pleasing All Men (Romans 15:2),* when he writes:

> What is the source of that desire to please, which we term courtesy? Let us look attentively into our heart, and we shall soon find an answer. The same Apostle that teaches us to be courteous, teaches us to honor all men; and his Master teaches me to love all men. Join these together, and what will be the effect? A poor wretch cries to me for an alms: I look, and see him covered with dirt and rags. But through these I see one that has an immortal spirit, made to know, and love, and dwell with God to eternity. I honor him for the Creator's sake. I see, through all these rags, that he is purpled over with the blood of Christ. I love him for the sake of his Redeemer. The courtesy, therefore which I feel and show toward him is a mixture of the honor and love which I bear to the offspring of God; the purchase of his Son's blood, and the candidate for immortality. This courtesy let us feel and show toward all men; and we shall please all men to their edification.[15]

The social justice principles of Pope John Paul II are corroborated by the words of John Wesley who asserts that all humankind should be seen and treated with honor and equality through the lens of the blood of Christ that covers us all in his never-ending, undying, unconditional, and yet accountable love.

*How Jesus Did It***?**

Therefore, the invitation to follow Jesus encompasses a Christological necessity. As His disciples centered on receiving the undeniable fact that Jesus modeled not only His compassion for acts of social justice during His earthly ministry, but He also exemplified the greatest act of love for all of humanity and provided a pathway for all His followers to witness and testify just how Jesus did it. Isaiah 53:5 (KJV) is a prophetic reminder of just how Jesus did it, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His

[15] John Wesley, "On Pleasing All Men," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 145.

stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:5). On our discipleship journey to learning more about how Jesus accomplished His mission, it is critical to discern that to fulfill His work on Calvary's Hill as outlined by the oracles of the Prophet Isaiah, the pathway of His plan had to be rolled out through His public ministry. In their work, *The Life of Jesus Christ In Its Historical Connexion and Historical Development*, regarding the public ministry of Christ and His conscious plan, August Neander and Charles Edward Blumenthal argue:

> The life of Christ presented a realized Ideal of human culture such as man's nature can never attain unto, let his development reach what point it may. He described the future effects of the truth which he revealed in a way that no man could comprehend at the time, and which centuries of history have only been contributing to illustrate. Nor was the progress of the future more clear to this vision than the steps in the history of the past, as is shown by his own statements of the relation which he sustained to the old dispensation.[16]

It is difficult on every level to think or imagine that the work of Christ can even remotely be compared to the Divine creations wrought through human agencies. On the contrary, Neander and Blumenthal insist:

> He could not, therefore, have held the same relation to the plan for whose accomplishment his labours were directed, as men who were mere instruments of God, however great. He resembled them, it is true, in the fact that his labours were ordered according to no plan of human contrivance, but to one laid down by God for the development of humanity; but he differed from them in this, that He understood the full compass of god's plan, and had freely made it his own; that it was the plan of his own mind, clearly standing forth in his consciousness when he commenced his labours. The account of his temptation, rightly understood, shows all this.[17]

According to John 9:4, Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." It seems apparent to the author

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[16] August Neander and Charles Edward Blumenthal, *The Life of Jesus Christ in its Historical Connexion and Historical Development*, trans. John McClintock (New York, NY: Harper and Bros, 1848), 80.

[17] Neander and Blumenthal, *The Life of Jesus Christ,* 80.

that Jesus' focus was clearly outlined by his assignment to do the work of the Father who sent him. Therefore, he was determined that nothing or no one would stand in the way or distract him from his mission. The stratus of his mission illuminates his desire to teach, prepare, entrust, and empower the twelve to spread the Gospel they received following his final victory. J. Dwight Pentecost presupposes:

> While He was in Perea, Jesus would carry on a public ministry. It was largely designed to prepare the disciples for the ministry that would be entrusted to them following His death and resurrection. The incidents that took place were illustrative of truths concerning their ministry. With Galilee hostile to Jesus and Judea and Jerusalem attempting to stone Him, there was no expectation that He would be publicly acclaimed as Messiah so that He could begin His reign.[18]

Pentecost holds, "Christ continued a ministry, not in hopes of reversing the trend, but rather to teach the disciples concerning their ministry on His behalf. Thus was Christ to spend the time until His appointed hour came when He must go to Jerusalem to fulfill the plan appointed for Him by the Father."[19]

Jesus was intentional about His public ministry and carving out time away from the demand of His public ministry to spend with His disciples. The reality of all of this is that Jesus' invitation has not changed, and Jesus wants to spend time with all of us who choose to follow Him.

Embodying Servant Leadership

Paramount to any disciple of Christ is the requirement to prioritize time in our lives daily to spend with Jesus. When we accept our obligation to pursue Jesus, we

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[18] J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ: A Study of the Life of Christ*, ed. John Danilson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 326.

[19] Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 326.

engage the need to *Embody Servant Leadership* as a means of exhibiting discipleship culture for the expansion of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is intentional about inviting us to follow Him (Matt. 4:18-22) alongside others who have made the decision to follow Him. I presuppose that embodying servant leadership encompasses an active commitment to studying the life of Jesus in community with others and engagement in social activities that nurture our common bond with Jesus Christ. The author suspects that such engagement informs the critical element of doing life together as Jesus modeled with His disciples and reaching others with an invitation to follow Jesus Christ.

The twenty-first-century church gets pulled into the vacuum of rush and hurry due to the demand brought on by the industries that exist in our societies; if we are not careful as followers of Jesus Christ to distinguish the obligation to more frequently deposit our overbooked schedules and agendas in the safety of spiritual formation amongst the company of like-minded believers. Thus, the author holds that an active commitment to studying the life of Jesus in community with others can be found in C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison's book, *Slow Church,* as they suggest:

> Slow Food and the other Slow movements hold important lessons for the American church. They compel us to ask ourselves tough questions about the ground our faith communities have ceded to the cult of speed. And they invite all of us—clergy, theologians, and laypeople—to start exploring and experimenting with the possibilities of Slow Church. Not as another growth strategy, but as a way of reimagining what it means to be communities of believers gathered and rooted in particular places at a particular time.[20]

In light of this, Smith and Pattison hold that the Slow Church movement is inspired by the language and philosophy of the Slow Food Movement as a means to

[20] C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison, *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 15.

rethink how we share life in our church communities. "Just as slow Food offers a pointed critique of industrialized food cultures and agricultures, Slow Church can help us unmask and repent of our industrialized and McDonaldized approaches to church."[21] Moreover, they suggest:

> It can also spur our Imaginations with a rich vision of the holistic, Interconnected and abundant life together to which God has called us in Christ Jesus….Slow Church is a call for intentionality, an awareness of our mutual interdependence with all people and all creation, and an attentiveness to the world around us and the work go is doing in our very own neighborhoods.[22]

Allen White's book, *Exponential Groups: Unleashing Your Church's Potential,* would simply argue, "Most people already have most of the relationships they need. They are already closely connected with the people who enrich their lives."[23] In his quest to encourage members of his church to sign up for a small group, he conducted a survey that asked small group members and non-small group members to indicate where they are strongest in these purposes adapted from Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life and The Purpose Driven Church:* Fellowship, worship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism. White discovered that the results were exactly the same, in that the folks who did not subscribe to a small group at the church felt they were high in all five. A follow up survey prompted these members that were not in any of the small groups to indicate what other believers they interacted with on a regular basis. Their responses to this

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[21] Smith and Pattison, *Slow Church,* 15.

[22] Smith and Pattison, *Slow Church,* 15.

[23] Allen White, *Exponential Groups: Unleashing Your Church's Potential* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2017), 122.

survey revealed they engaged with friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, people they served with at church, customers, and a variety of other relationships.[24]

Embodying servant leadership in a community with others is not limited to one way of engaging in spiritual formation. In lieu, our fellowship, conversations, worship, ministry, and witness with one another in small groups or otherwise should bear the fruit of spending time with Jesus. Furthermore, our engagement in social activities nurtures our common bond in Jesus Christ. Out of his book, *Paul's Idea of Community,* Australian theologian Robert Banks lifts the idea that "each one of the various local churches [in the Apostle Paul's day] is an expression of the heavenly church, a manifestation of that which is essentially eternal and infinite."[25] The Body of Christ is interconnected and as such C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison assert:

> Christ's incarnation isn't limited to the first century. It continues into the present through the church—the body of Christ—through communities of believers who are faithfully rooted in their places, embodying Christ in ways that can be experienced and known by the particular people who live in those places.[26]

While Robert Banks invites us to reflect on the diversity of community amongst the local churches in Paul's day, there is an invitation to continue as the community of believers today striving for the unity that binds us by Christ's love that we might be rooted in the social impact of our churches, neighborhoods, and workplaces otherwise.

In *Jesus and the Disinherited,* respected author and theologian Howard Thurman says, "Once the neighbor is defined, then one's moral obligation is clear. In a memorable

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[24] White, *Exponential Groups: Unleashing Your Church's Potential,* 122.

[25] Robert J. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Cultural Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 42.

[26] Smith and Pattison, *Slow Church*, 61.

story, Jesus defined the neighbor by telling of the Good Samaritan. With sure artistry and great power, he depicted what happens when a man responds directly to human need across the barriers of class, race, and condition."[27] Thurman affirms, "Neighborliness is nonspatial; it is qualitative. A man must love his neighbor directly, permitting no barriers between."[28] Thurman presses us to express the love of Christ by intentionally extending ourselves to our neighbors beyond our network of comfort. If we are to embody true servanthood, Thurman presupposes that our social response as believers should be guided by Christ's love for all humankind.

Lastly, our embodiment of Christ's impact in our lives emboldens a desire to reach others with an invitation to follow Jesus Christ. Psalm 34:8 (KJV) says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him." Jesus' invitation to Simon (called Peter), Andrew, James, and John, was not an invitation to hoard the goodness of the Messiah. Rather the purpose of the invitation was to come and learn more about Jesus so that they too would be eager to extend that same invitation to many others to come and taste his goodness.

Empowerment Through the Holy Spirit

Hence, our growth and development as disciples of Jesus Christ must be empowered through the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus' ascension in Luke 24:49 (NASB), Jesus spoke to his disciples saying, "And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

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[27] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1976), 79.

[28] Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 79.

We cannot live out our passions and convictions to the word, work, and ministry of Jesus Christ without acknowledging the fact that the victory in this comes through the work and power of the Holy Spirit to help us. Thus, we will attempt to examine the Holy Spirit across two precarious components. First, our need to let the Holy Spirit work: should be guided by our commitment to follow Jesus Christ as His disciples upon accepting the gift of salvation. Therefore, our day-by-day walk with Jesus is anchored in the words of David Lowes Watson, "Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, working in us and through us." In his book, *Covenant Discipleship*, Watson asserts, "We learn the mind of Christ and are assured of his guidance and strength every step of the way. No aspect of our lives, no detail, is too large or too small to place in the hands of the God who is at once our creator, savior, and spiritual counselor."[29] The reality is that none of us are exempt from the trials and temptations of this world. For this reason, God sends us a Helper to supernaturally work through us to live out the assurance of the Holy Word.

Subsequently, in their book describing the *Band Meetings* that John Wesley (the founder of Methodism) organized for the sake of accountability and spiritual growth, entitled, *The Band Meeting: Rediscovering Relational Discipleship in Transformational Community*, Drs. Kevin Watson and Scott Kisker assert band meetings consist of a small group [of about five people; gender or marital orientated] to help people connect well with God and others. In these groups historically, people confessed sin to each other to

[29] David Lowes Watson, *Covenant Discipleship: Christian Formation Through Mutual Accountability* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1991*),* 1.

grow in holiness. They named the places of deepest brokenness, where they found that sin was in control of them and they were, in their striving, powerless over it.[30]

Wesley understood the importance of growing together as accountable disciples of Jesus Christ. Thus, we can presume that small group fellowship makes space not only for us to share our vulnerabilities, but also as an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to move in and through us in this sacred space. In the book, *Forgotten God,* Francis Chan and Danae Yankoski hold, "The reality is that the early church knew less about the Holy Spirit than most of us in the church today, at least in the intellectual sense. But they came to know the Spirit intimately and powerfully as He worked in and through their lives."[31] My curiosity informs a sense that the believer's desire to know God more fully, should certainly prompt some introspective questions such as: What does it look like to let the Holy Spirit have more of me? Holy Spirit, what is your will for my life? Such questions reveal our need to depend on the Holy Spirit's power when considering the second component.

Identifying the evidence of the Holy Spirit's power at work in us and through us is germane to our growth in our relationship with Christ; therefore, our submission to the power of the Holy Spirit helps us to recognize and prioritize the matters of the Kingdom more effectively. In his book, *The Essential Guide to the Power of the Holy Spirit: God's Miraculous Gift at Work Today*, Randy Clark argues, "Even though cessationists often cite the works of theologians who embrace a reformed perspective, there is nevertheless a

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[30] Kevin M. Watson and Scott T. Kisker, *The Band Meeting: Rediscovering Relational Discipleship in Transformational Community* (Nashville, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2017), 12.

[31] Francis Chan and Danae Yankoski, *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit* (Colorado Springs, CO: David D. Cook, 2009), 36.

compelling body of evidence suggesting that the very individuals who are used to lend credibility to a cessationists perspective have personally encountered the power of the Holy Spirit through *Charismatic experiences.*"[32] Clark asserts, notable preacher and pastor, Charles Spurgeon, was known for his ministry of healing prayer, and early Scottish reformer John Knox experienced the gift of prophecy.

Moreover, the ancient halls of history unveil the identification of the Holy Spirit's power at work even during water baptisms as the Early Church Father, Tertullian instructed catechumens [young Christian converts] preparing for baptism:

> Therefore, you blessed ones, for whom the grace of God is waiting, when you come up from the most sacred bath of the new birth, when you spread out your hands for the first time in your mother's house with your brethren, ask your Father, ask your Lord, for the special gift of His inheritance, the distributed charisms [gifts of the Holy Spirit]…. Ask, He says, and you shall receive.[33]

Clark proposes:

> Doctrine and experience are not at odds with each other, as if one had to pick either doctrine or experience (regarding the manifestation of the Holy Spirit). The truth is that they should go hand in hand. What we read about in Scripture is not simply for the purpose of acquiring more head knowledge. Rather, the Bible should become a blueprint and manual, fueling our expectation for what is possible in a life indwelt by God.[34]

Our experience of the work of God's miraculous power nurture's our faith and empowers us to stand in expectation of the power of the Holy Spirit. Candy Gunther Brown writes:

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[32] Randy Clark, "Tracing the Holy Spirit's Powerful Hand in History," in The *Essential Guide to the Power of the Holy Spirit: God's Miraculous Gift at Work Today* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2015), chap. 3, EBSCOhost.

[33] George Montague and Killian McDonnell, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1994), 108.

[34] Randy Clark, "Does It Elevate the Truth and Promote Love For God and Others," in *The Essential Guide to the Power of the Holy Spirit* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2015), chap. 11, EBSCOhost.

> When someone sees two brothers' blind eyes open, as did a professor who specialized in brain research at Washington University, it becomes difficult to remain a cessationists. This professor was a member of a Presbyterian church, and he had been discipled as a cessationists, but he could not, with intellectual honesty, continue as a cessationists after a trip with Global Awakening to Brazil where he saw many healings and a few miracles.[35]

For any disciple of Jesus Christ to deny the experiential gift of the Holy Spirit in their lives, is to the detriment of their maturation in the Spirit of God!

Conclusion

In conclusion, I affirm that the premise of the theological framework here is to inform the pathway outlined in Matthew 4:18-22 as a means of getting back to the core of Jesus Christ's invitation into an ongoing relationship and growth in Jesus. Dr. John Fletcher Hurst affirms that the organization of class meetings was discovered amidst John Wesley's concern about not being able to see the behavior of each person in his neighborhood, and several *walkers* did much hurt within the community before Mr. Wesley was apprised of it.[36] While it is not clear what is meant by a walker, it is apparent that they caused disruptions within the [Methodists] societies. The result of thinking through ways to address the matter exposed the method of the class meeting (discipleship meetings) which was first adopted at Bristol in 1742.

Upon examining the voices of the scholars and their contributions, the authors curiosity is peaked by a school of thought and the necessity thereof for believers alike to prioritize their spiritual formation. Furthermore, I suspect that proactive growth coupled

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[35] Candy Gunther Brown, *Testing Prayer: Science and Healing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 60-61, 155-157, 161, 254-255.

[36] Hurst, *John Wesley the Methodist: A Plain Account of His Life and Work,* 123-124.

with proper discipling opportunities in fellowship with other believers encompasses Jesus' invitation to humanity. John Wesley recognized the influence of the walkers on the community of believers, and his response apologetically resulted in organizing class meetings (small groups). Seemingly, twenty-first-century culture is gaining more and more influence with today's generations, and the church bears the responsibility to implement a swift apologetic response lest our generations continue moving further and further away from prioritizing their spiritual growth.

Hence, the doctoral project proposes the implementation of a boot camp centered on a theology of discipleship that invites a small group of disciples into an intense six-week journey of fellowship, accountability, and growth with the end all charge to identify leaders within the group who will recruit others into the next group to begin journeying together as a life group. Matthew 4:18-22 extends an invitation to every disciple to do life together, as Jesus did with His disciples. Moreover, Journey of Faith is situated within the context of a mission field that according to MissionInsite.com reports that 35.1% (34.5% US Avg.) of the residents in the area do not believe in God, 41.2% (35.4% US Avg.) no longer believe, 42.5% (43.1% US Avg.) are unsure about personal beliefs, and a whopping 47.1% (45.7% US Avg) say faith was not relevant to their lives.[37] Consequently, Norman Geisler and Frank Turek's apologetic proposes, "…it's often forgotten that faith is also required to believe any worldview, including atheism and pantheism."[38] I sense that the culture of social media, online platforms, and other agendas

[37] MissionInsite, "Comparative Report," MissionInsite, https://peopleview.missioninsite.com/app/#/welcome/demographics/step-3.

[38] Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, "The Faith of an Antheist," in *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), introduction, ProQuest Ebook Central.

that compete for our attention have in many ways influenced (or preached) a gospel to the generations of the twenty-first century that has left many rejecting the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the end of all authority.

Additionally, MissonInsite.com reports that 64.4% (63.2% US Avg) refuse to participate in church because they do not feel welcomed.[39] Bearing these statistics in mind, the author asserts that the Church must shift to defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ and multiply disciples for the expansion of the Kingdom of God. Respected scholar C. S. Lewis makes a claim for Christianity in his book, *Mere Christianity,* saying, "The Christian way is different: harder, and easier. Christ says, 'Give me All. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You."[40] Our Christology, embodiment of servant leadership, and identification of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives thus hold us accountable to the tension of the counterculture that has exalted itself against the Kingdom of God. To address this more practically, our theological disposition informs the need to develop a culture of disciple-making at the intersection of change culture of which we will discuss more fully in the next chapter.

[39] MissionInsite, "Comparative Report," MissionInsite, https://peopleview.missioninsite.com/app/#/welcome/demographics/step-3.

[40] Lewis, *Mere Christianity,* 196.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Approximately ninety percent of Journey of Faith neglects participation in a Bible Study or small groups. Therefore, I suspect a proper disciple-making model will guide and realign our context and impact our mission field. Considering most consistently neglect the invitation to engage in their spiritual formation through Bible Study or small group opportunities, I wonder whether the wider aggregation of Journey of Faith can distinguish whether they have been successfully discipled. On August 18, 2023, the New York Times reported Ukrainian and Russian troop casualties from the Russo-Ukraine War estimated near 500,000.[1] On November 21, 2023, a report from the United Nations indicated that at least 10,000 civilians, including more than 560 children, were killed, and over 18,500 have been injured since Russia's full-scale armed attack against Ukraine on February 24, 2022.[2] Whereas these casualties are overwhelmingly staggering, could it be possible to identify spiritually similar parallels of loss and or absence of fully equipped disciples throughout the Body of Christ? Could it be that disciples are not multiplying in local churches as they should because they are spiritually injured or dying off?

[1] Helene Cooper, "Troop Deaths and Injuries in Ukraine War Near 500,000, U.S. Officials Say," The New York Times Online, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/18/us/politics/ukraine-russia-war-casualties.html.

[2] United Nations, "Civilian Deaths in Ukraine War Top 10,000, UN Says," United Nations Ukraine Online, accessed, https://ukraine.un.org/en/253322-civilian-deaths-ukraine-war-top-10000-un-says .

Dr. Dann Spader has been the director of SonLife Discipleship Ministries for over thirty years and has multiplied thousands of disciples for Jesus over the years. In his book, *4 Chair Discipling*, Spader asserts,

> Never forget: our goal is multiplication. Want to reach new people (Chair 1), see them grow (Chair 2), equip them as workers (Chair 3), and then send them out to launch new ministries (Chair 4) …We must send them out. We want them to leave. We want them to start their own families. We want them to "go and bear fruit.[3]

Considering this, the doctoral project leans into the need to design a replicable disciple-making model that will facilitate a culture centered on discipleship within and around the ministry context. To accomplish this effectively, we will examine the intersection between discipleship and organizational development (OD) as an interdisciplinary field. Theoretically, we will investigate these more specifically through acclaimed German Social Psychologist Kurt Lewin's Change Theory.

As previously stated in my theological foundation chapter, Matthew 4:18-22 sets forth a model for simple discipling that thematically affirms a theological framework for developing a culture of ongoing discipleship. The text does not stop at being sought after or found by Jesus on this journey of life, and it is not just enough to accept the invitation (salvation) to become a disciple of Jesus. On the contrary, the text highlights an invitation to walk with Him, learn from Him, and imitate Him while reaching others for Him. Having said this, to effectively facilitate continuing discipleship as the priority of the culture at Journey of Faith, I will invite the voices, data, and methods of the professionals of the organizational development field into the conversation, once again giving direct attention to Lewin's Change Theory.

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[3] Dann L. Spader, *4 Chair Discipling: Growing a Movement of Disciple-Makers* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 103.

The *Organizational Development Guide: Definition, Process, and Development Models* is a program description by Maryville University that asserts that organizational development is a planned, systematic change in the values or operations of employees to create overall growth in a company or organization. It differs from everyday operations and workflow improvements that follows a specific protocol that management communicates clearly to all employees.[4]

According to the description provided by the team at *WalkMe: The Change Management Blog*:

> Organizational development on a fundamental level uses a critical/science-based process of gathering scientific and intensive market research as the basis for organizational development processes, while embedding the *s*kills to change within the staff to make the organization more effective **(t**he staff's readiness for and engagement with change defines the success of organizational development). As such, human resources departments are essential in supporting this aspect of OD, and finally OD creates, refines, and builds on structures, processes, and strategies. The assertion here is that reaching organizational development goals increases efficiency and company sustainability within the market.[5]

The key components of organizational development include: Diagnosis, Interventions, Change Management, Leadership Development, Team Building, Cultural Change, Training and Development, Conflict Resolution, Performance Management, and Feedback and Evaluation. We do not have time to examine all of these. However, in the interests of the DMin project, it is my goal to focus the attention and work on examining Lewin's Change Theory (LCT) as the theoretical framework to inform our understanding of how cultural change can impact the ministry context of Journey of Faith. It is critical

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[4] Maryville University, "Organizational Development Guide: Definition, Process and Development Models," Maryville University Online, https://online.maryville.edu/online-masters-degrees/management-and-leadership/resources/organizational-development-guide/.

[5] WalkMe Team, "Organizational Development: Theories on Organizational Change," WalkMe: The Change Management Blog, https://change.walkme.com/organizational-development/.

to focus on Kurt Lewin's proven three-stage model which is typically expressed through the concept of unfreeze, change, and refreeze.

Interdisciplinary Theory – Lewin's Change Theory

If the demonstration of the theoretical interactions between LCT and Discipleship with the project problem, biblical, history, and theology foundations, it should be noted that our pathway be guided to define Lewin's Change Theory. In an article titled "People Skills: Change Management Tools—Lewin's Change Model," Robert Levasseur presents a description of Lewin's Change Theory as a component of organizational development, saying, "Successful change enablers rely on a handful of tools that work. The most powerful tool in my toolbox is Kurt Lewin's simple three-step change model." According to Dr. Lewin (1958), the first step in changing behavior is to unfreeze the existing situation. Only then can change or movement occur. Finally, to make the new behaviors stick, a third, refreezing step is necessary.[6] In Lewin's first step—unfreezing, Levasseur claims,

> A fundamental principle of effective change management is that people support what they help to create….the next time you are involved in the development and introduction of something new into an existing system, you will appreciate the vital importance of involving people in the process up front to unfreeze their behavior and minimize their resistance to change.[7]

Thus, I seek to establish that step one of Lewin's theories helps to clarify the need to unfreeze. By presenting members of the organization with the issue(s) impeding the organization's expansion and onboarding said members with the proposed new direction

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[6] Robert Levasseur, "People Skills: Change Management Tools: Lewin's Change Theory," *Interfaces* 31, no. 4 (Jul.-Aug. 2001): 71-73, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25062720.

[7] Robert Levasseur, "People Skills: Change Management Tools," 71-73.

by which the organization seeks to present and implement in the change process. Subsequently, steps two and three of Lewin's model inform what the organization needs to do. Levasseur states, "Movement takes place after people have bought into the need for change. This is the point at which the work of examining the existing system and developing the new system gets underway."[8]

According to scholar, Ed Rosch of the Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center in an article examining, *Lewin's Field Theory as Situated in Organizational Change*, Dr. Lewin examines the social construct of groups, the individuals within these groups, and the psychological and physiological aspects of how they function claiming, "Any individual is at any moment subject to a number of…forces, which form a field 'around' them. The aggregate of all the forces in the field was called the 'life space' consisting of the person and their psychological and physiological environments."[9] Interestingly, Lewin's work on *field theory* as presented by Dr. Rosch argues that effective change within an organization is not only psychological, but physiological as well. In addition, Lewin argues for an analogical life space that exists for groups which also consists of the group and its environment which can be thought of as all factors that influence the group's psychological, or cognitive functioning. Lewin's assertion on the ground seems to inform the need to be sensitive to change implementation given this concept of life spaces and how change can positively or negatively affect the response of the individual and or the group's life space depending on how the forces (proposed changes and the approach thereof) have been presented. Researcher, Bernard Burnes

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[8] Robert Levasseur, "People Skills: Change Management Tools," 71-73.

[9] Ed Rosch, "Lewin's Field Theory as Situated Action in Organizational Change," *Organizational Development Journal* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 8-13, ProQuest.

holds that field theory is Lewin's metatheory, [and] it provides the foundation on which all his work is built.[10] According to Burnes, we know that Lewin was concerned with behavioral psychology was greatly influenced by Gestalt psychology which we will say more on later.

In an excerpt adapted from, *The Complete Social Scientist: A Kurt Lewin Reader*, Dr. Lewin and Dr. Paul Grabbe (1945) point out, "Experience in leadership training and in many areas of re-education, such as re-education regarding alcoholism or delinquency, indicates that it is easier to change the ideology and social practice of a small group handled together than of single individuals."[11] This excerpt is an extrapolation from the chapter, *Group Decision and Social Change*, and is part of a wider collection of Lewin's notes emphasizing the effectiveness of decision-making within groups over against a single individual. Thus, it underscores Lewin's disposition regarding life spaces as a constant connection, and the imperative to collaborate with the group when preparing to shift change within the organization. The diagram below provides a detailed snapshot of Lewin's Change Process.

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[10] Bernard Burnes, "The Origins of Lewin's Three-Step Model of Change," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 56, no. 1 (March 2020): 32-59, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0021886319892685.

[11] Kurt Lewin, "Group Decision and Social Change," in *The Complete Social Scientist: A Kurt Lewin Reader,* ed. Martin Gold (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1999), 273.

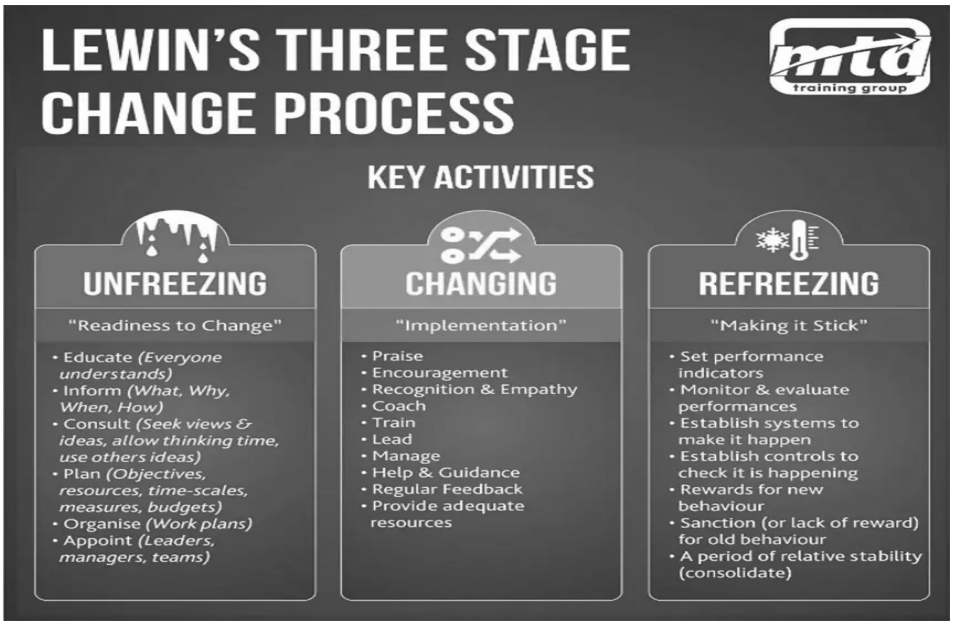
LEWIN'S THREE STAGE CHANGE PROCESS
mtd training group
KEY ACTIVITIES
UNFREEZING
"Readiness to Change"
• Educate (Everyone understands)
• Inform (What, Why, When, How)
• Consult (Seek views & ideas, allow thinking time, use others ideas)
• Plan (Objectives, resources, time-scales, measures, budgets)
• Organise (Work plans)
• Appoint (Leaders, managers, teams)
CHANGING
"Implementation"
• Praise
• Encouragement
• Recognition & Empathy
• Coach
• Train
• Lead
• Manage
• Help & Guidance
• Regular Feedback
• Provide adequate resources
REFREEZING
"Making it Stick"
• Set performance indicators
• Monitor & evaluate performances
• Establish systems to make it happen
• Establish controls to check it is happening
• Rewards for new behaviour
• Sanction (or lack of reward) for old behaviour
• A period of relative stability (consolidate)

Figure 1.

This process presents change as three detailed steps. According to the diagram from the Management Training Specialists (MTS), I wish to provide an additional breakdown of Lewin's Change Model from the MTS whereby we will attempt to cross-examine the project problem, Biblical, historical, and theological foundations. Let us now look at each stage of LCT in detail.

Stage One: Unfreezing

In business, the unfreeze stage of Lewin's Change Model is all about preparing team members to accept that changes must take place. These changes could be financial, organizational, managerial, etc. When executing the first step of Lewin's model, managers and leaders must craft a compelling [narrative] to explain why the current way of doing things is no longer effective and how change can make things better. Often, the Unfreeze stage is the most challenging phase. People naturally get confused or frustrated when they learn they must change the way they do things, and it can take time to get

them on board. If you do an adequate job at convincing people to re-examine the company's core values or current approach [during the unfreeze stage], you can gain buy-in from others and get the engagement needed to bring about legitimate, positive change.

Stage Two: Changing

After you have obtained buy-in from others and your organization is ready to change, you will move into the second stage — aptly labeled "Change." During the Change stage, you will start acting and making adjustments to the way your team or business does things. To succeed during this stage, you must communicate your plans and explain why you are making certain decisions. You should also focus on short-term wins to keep people motivated and encourage them to continue moving forward with your plan.

A common obstacle that comes up during the change stage has to do with fear. Your team members might feel uncertain about or afraid of your decisions or plans. They may be hesitant to make changes or push back when you suggest they do something differently. To combat this issue, you must demonstrate why your ideas will be effective and how they will provide long-term benefits to the company (increasing productivity, improving financial performance, etc.). Celebrating milestones and small victories also helps during this stage.

Stage Three: Refreezing

The final stage, Refreeze, solidifies your team and gets them comfortable with the new status quo. When you progress to this stage, everyone will have bought into the

changes and committed to upholding them long-term. For many managers and leaders, it is easier to move into this stage when they review what they have accomplished, celebrate wins, and address issues that have arisen along the way.

Ideally, at the end of the third stage, your team or organization will be stronger and better prepared to deal with upcoming challenges. If you do not get to the Refreeze stage — meaning employees still have not bought into your vision and are resistant to change — you will need to go back to one or both previous stages and troubleshoot. There are several examples of changes you can make to get your team to the Refreeze stage. One is to establish a strong support network that includes active participants and new supporters. One can create reward systems that motivate team members to take risks or try new things. Create a sense of urgency by explaining the risks or problems that could result from not implementing your idea. Establish clear metrics that you can use to measure progress. One can prepare for resistance and plan responses to people's inevitable pushback. After implementing these steps, you will have an easier time gaining team members' buy-in and getting everyone on the same page.[12]

Now that a full description of Lewin's Change Theory and its concepts have been established, I would like to demonstrate how this specific theoretical framework rises out of the organizational development interdisciplinary to interact with the doctoral project problem, Biblical, historical, and theological foundations. As we engage each of these, I like would remind us to view them through the lens that Journey of Faith does not attend Bible Study or small groups on a wide scale, thus highlighting possible deficiency in

[12] MTS Authors, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Lewin's Change Model," Management Training Specialists, https://www.mtdtraining.com/blog/advantages-disadvantages-lewins-change-model.htm.

one's discipleship journey. Hence, I will propose implementing a proper disciple-making model to cultivate a discipleship culture that will reshape the ministry context.

What New Insights Has The Author Gained?

Upon examining LCT and the approach, I feel it was incredibly insightful to learn that Lewin's model is grounded firmly by his work on field theory, and more specifically as it covers how people engage life and decisions as groups juxtapose their individuality. Despite the criticisms of Dr. Lewin's change model and its tendency to be overly simple, a further impression on the author concerning the project problem, biblical, historical, and theological was learning how much influence Gestalt psychology had on all of Lewin's work.

A Gestalt is a perceptual pattern that is the construct of the individual mind.[13] Gestalt psychology "is a school of thought that looks at the human mind and behavior as a whole."[14] "A core belief in Gestalt psychology is holism, or that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts."[15] For this reason, Kurt Lewin maintained, "What is important in field theory is the way the analysis proceeds…[this is important] because a life space is a system, a Gestalt, [and] a change to one force can have unintended consequences if one

[13] Bernard Burnes, "The Origins of Lewin's Three-Step Model of Change," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 56, no. 1 (March 2020): 32-59, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0021886319892685.

[14] Very Well Mind, "What Is Gestalt Psychology," VeryWellMind, https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-gestalt-psychology-2795808.

[15] Frank Jäkel, Manish Singh, Felix A Wichmann, and Michael H.Herzog, "An Overview of Quantative Approaches in Gestalt Perception," *Vision Research* 126, no. 1 (September 2016): 3-8, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.visres.2016.06.004.

does not understand how that change will affect other forces in the life."[16] Hence, this explains why LCT meticulously and intentionally encourages approaching the group as a whole to present the issues and the proposed resolutions in collaboration with the group. Additionally, it provides organizers with the foresight necessary for developing a methodology to any potential counter-reactions to what is presented during the onboarding process. This approach is germane to the success of the change the organization seeks to refreeze. Therefore, bearing these insights in mind, we now turn to cross-examine the project problem biblical, historical, and theological foundations of the author's work.

The Project Problem and Lewin's Change Theory:

The ultimate goal of the project is to use change culture to facilitate a discipleship culture at Journey of Faith. To facilitate a changing culture centered on discipleship as the obligation of every believer, I propose developing the Doing Life Together (DLT) Boot Camp; an intense six-week discipleship boot camp inviting ten individuals to participate in the (DLT) group. The author suspects that the DLT Boot Camp will prompt each participant to experience and see their spiritual formation (discipleship) as their obligation to engage in a continuous pathway of doing (or growing in) life together with other disciples of Jesus Christ.

[16] Kurt Lewin, *Principles of Topological Psychology,* trans. by Fritz Heider and Grace Heider (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill 1936).

How Does the Framework Shape Research in the overall project?

LCT seeks to unfreeze the counter-productivity of an organization's culture to set the organization on a new course for expansion. However, the success of that new path rests on the ability to onboard the group by effectively communicating the issues and proposing alternative measures that will aid the mission of the organization. Through the lens of this stage, the author proposes a discipleship boot camp to address the contextual problem affecting the life of the ministry. Why a discipleship boot camp? Onboarding is critical in stage one of LCT. "Basic Combat Training (or Boot Camp as is commonly known) is required of all new enlisted soldiers to create a strong foundation for their military experience and future goals."[17] Generally speaking, boot camp helps the soldiers to unfreeze to transition from civilian life into militarized culture.

Thus, change (stage two of LCT) proposes new goals for implementation. According to the U.S. Army, "The goal of a boot camp is threefold: to build you up, help you discover your inner strength, and equip you to succeed in life. It is challenging and designed to push each soldier to become the best version of themselves mentally and physically."[18]

Therefore, implementation of the new goals clears the pathway for stage three of LCT to refreeze to foster a new culture. It is of grave importance to underscore that boot camp is the place where soldiers are introduced and indoctrinated regarding the principles and values of the military branch they have chosen. The military affirms that each soldier

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[17] U. S. Army, "Basic Training*,"* GoArmy.gov, https://www.goarmy.com/army-life/basic-training.html.

[18] U.S. Army, "Basic Training*,"* GoArmy.gov, https://www.goarmy.com/army-life/basic-training.html.

must live out the mission and values of the organization. This leaves us to wonder whether the call for the soldiers (disciples) of God's Army differs much from the military's goals. The author suspects that the DLT Boot Camp will serve the purpose of contextual change engaging disciples of Jesus Christ on every level during an intense six-week fellowship, bonding, and training exercise to refreeze in a new cycle of continuous spiritual formation.

How Does New Insights from Lewin's Change Theory Interact and Shape Project?

The observations gathered from LCT impress the need to appeal to the psychological and physiological nature of a group by creating an open line of communication, collaboration, and celebration of milestones and small victories. Thus, it is my understanding concerning the project that unfreezing, changing, and refreezing a culture starts with addressing mindsets, and views perhaps surveying more deeply within an intimate setting through the DLT Boot Camp the reason(s) that have prevented the group members from participating in regular discipleship opportunities.

Biblical Foundations and Lewin's Change Theory:

In the preamble of Matthew 4:18-22, the first evangelist composes a narrative examining Jesus as He recruits His first four disciples. The simplicity and profundity of the passage provide significant details regarding the actions that Jesus takes to secure His initial disciples. Therefore, within the framework of the biblical foundations, I presuppose that the central thesis of Matthew 4:18-22 provided a repetitive pathway necessary for making disciples.

How Does the Theory Shape the Research in the Biblical Foundations?

In that, the author argues that Matthew 4:18-22 offers a hermeneutical assertion that Jesus' invitation to His disciples to follow Him outlines a pathway into replicable discipleship in the Biblical Foundations. I affirm that the first evangelist highlights Jesus' progression across four actions as He: travels to search for them, looks around to identify them, extends an urgent invitation to them, and Jesus repeats the first three actions by demonstrating them for His disciples. I intend to raise an argument foundationally that every believer's scriptural duty should follow in line with the pathway that Jesus models in the framework of this pericope.

Thus, further examination of the exegetical work here reflects my desire to present Jesus's mission to ultimately disciple the world. If a change in the ministry context is to be fruitful, the text seems to suggest that our lives should not only reflect the actions of Jesus' passion for making other disciples for Him; rather, it prompts the believer to remember there is always an opportunity for making more disciples, and our commitment to Christ [the Kingdom/Organization] should be living into this cycle of repeating His disciple-making actions for one another. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for us to share His compassion with others as we remember and reflect on where we were when Jesus found us.

According to Michael Joseph Brown:

> Matthew tells us that [Galilee of the Gentiles] is the place where Jesus' ministry will unfold. This prophecy is a powerful first indication that Jesus' message will reach beyond the confines of Judaism…. Jesus does His work among a mixed group of Jews, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, immigrants, and others that constituted the region of Galilee.[19]

[19] Michael Joseph Brown, *True Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary — Matthew 4:12-25,* eds. Brian K. Blount, Cain Hope Felder, Clarice J. Martin, and Emerson B. Powery (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 91.

Lewin's theory on the wise of refreezing informs Christ's desires for an ecumenical Body of Believers. All things considered, the author senses that acceptance and implementation of proactive discipleship will produce compassion-filled followers as outlined in the Biblical Foundation.

How Does New Insights From Lewin's Change Theory Interact with the Biblical Foundations?

The insights gained from LCT synergize with the exegetical conclusions to prod us to look into a mirror of questions such as: What condition was my heart in when Jesus found me? What state of mind did Jesus have to pull me out of? Despite my brokenness, He really thought I was worth following Him? The passage indicates an interpretation for inviting (onboarding) the members of Journey of Faith to reflect introspectively at where they were and what they were desiring when they met Jesus. Furthermore, it affirms their commitment as a group (The Body of Christ) to move deeper into their relationship with Jesus.

Historical Foundations and Lewin's Change Theory

John Wesley and his brother Charles managed to revolutionize the Christian world through their passion and desire to live and extend an invitation to others to live a life grounded in holiness. Contextually, I offer a close examination of John Wesley's accomplishments and the key figures that surrounded him, which are necessary for today's ministry context and the foundation of the DMin project. The Wesley's time at Oxford helps us to gain a greater understanding of the events that took place before the official formation of the Methodist movement that spread like wildfire.

How Does the Theory Shape the Research in the Historical Foundations?

In a letter in the *London Magazine* (1760), Wesley wrote that the following words influenced his desire to organize the early meetings at Oxford which read:

> If good men of the Church will unite together in the several parts of the kingdom, disposing themselves into friendly societies, and engaging each other, in their respective combinations, to be helpful to each other in all good Christian ways, it will be the most effectual means for restoring our decaying Christianity to its primitive life and vigour, and the supporting of our tottering and sinking Church.[20]

Wesley's invitation to ignite a revival throughout the Church beginning with a call to invite good men into discipleship gatherings (societies), offers a solid historical premise for facilitating the unfreeze process in the context.

The effectiveness of the Wesley's 'Holy Club at Oxford' serves as the precursor to the formation of the widespread Wesleyan societies. The Wesley's produced two additional small group models from the historical religious societies model they revitalized at Oxford. Class Meetings and Band Meetings were ingenious models that grew out of the societies developed to create smaller gatherings to encourage more intimate sharing and accountability. Similarly, LCT converges on the need to be innovative when developing the vehicles for change within the organization.

Therefore, the author suggests that a reminder of the Wesley's ability to discern such creative ways to chorale disciples into smaller groups that nurture their ongoing spiritual journey would help to facilitate a meaningful discipleship cycle at Journey of Faith.[21]

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[20] John S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* (London, UK: The Epworth Press, 1955, originally 1921), 9.

[21] Doing Life Together (DLT) Groups as suggested by the author's proposed project.

How Does New Insights from Lewin's Change Theory Interact with the Historical Foundations?

John Fletcher Hurst, ordained Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1880. Hurst, "affirms that organization of class meetings was discovered amidst Wesley's concern around not being able to see the behavior of each person in his neighborhood, and several walkers did much hurt within the community before Mr. Wesley was apprised of it."[22] While it is not clear what is meant by a walker, it is apparent that they caused disruptions within societies. The result of thinking through ways to address the matter exposed the method of the class meeting which was first adopted at Bristol in 1742. Thus, my observation of John Wesley's willingness to collaborate with his team reels into scope Dr. Lewin's insights regarding the power of group decisions, and how the approach to change can have a positive or negative impact depending on the strategies. Dr. David Watson affirms, "that class meetings were a supportive structure for discipleship, grounded in the realities of daily living in the world, and undergirded by common sense."[23]

Theological Foundations and Lewin's Change Theory Summary

My theological foundation informs the pathway set forth in Matthew 4:18-22 as a means of getting back to the core of Jesus Christ's invitation into ongoing relationship and growth in Him. Upon examining the voices of theological scholarship and their contributions, my curiosity is piqued by a school of thought and the necessity thereof for

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[22] Hurst, *John Wesley the Methodist: A Plain account of His Life and Work,* 123-24.

[23] David Lowes Watson, *Covenant Discipleship: Christian Formation Through Mutual Accountability* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1991), 29-30.

believers alike to prioritize their spiritual formation. What could the 21st Century church accomplish for the Kingdom of God if proactive growth coupled with proper discipling opportunities in fellowship with other believers become our priority in the Earth realm?

How Does the Theory Shape the Research in the Theological Foundations?

Seemingly, the twenty-first-century culture is gaining more and more influence with today's generations, and the church bears the responsibility to implement a swift apologetic response lest our generations continue moving further and further away from prioritizing the invitation to follow Jesus Christ. The culture of social media, online platforms, and other agendas that compete for our attention have in many ways influenced (or preached) a gospel to today's generations that has left many rejecting the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the end of all authority.

As a reminder, Journey of Faith situates within the context of a mission field that according to MissionInsite.com reports 35.1% (34.5% US Avg.) of the residents in the area do not believe in God, 41.2% (35.4% US Avg.) no longer believe, 42.5% (43.1% US Avg.) are unsure about personal beliefs, and a whopping 47.1% (45.7% US Avg) say faith was not relevant to their lives.[24] Consequently, Norman Geisler and Frank Turek's apologetic proposes, "…it's often forgotten that faith is also required to believe any worldview, including atheism and pantheism."[25]

Hence the very reason that the doctoral project proposes the implementation of a boot camp centered on a theology of discipleship that invites a small group of disciples

[24] MissionInsite, "Comparative Report," MissionInsite, https://peopleview.missioninsite.com/app/#/welcome/demographics/step-3.

[25] Geisler and Turek, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist,* introduction.

into an intense six-week journey of fellowship, accountability, and growth with the end all charge to identify leaders within the group who will recruit others into the next group to begin journeying together as a life group. Respected scholar, C.S. Lewis makes a claim for Christianity in his book, *Mere Christianity,* saying, "The Christian way is different: harder, and easier. Christ says, 'Give me All. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You."[26] In light of Lewis' call to accountability with Christ, I suggest that a refreeze of the cultural proposals outlined in the theological foundations corroborate stage three of Lewin's Change Theory.

How Does the New Insights from Lewin's Change Theory interact with the Theological Foundations?

Lewin's Change Theory appeals to the psychological and physiological dispositions of the organization while confronting the forces that have upset the life space. Additionally, LCT encourages ongoing communication and engagement as a part of the culture to ensure the team at large is meeting benchmarks. Our Christology, embodiment of servant leadership, and identification of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives hold us accountable to respond to the mindsets and dispositions influencing the counter-cultural cosmos. In order to address this more practically, our theological disposition is grounded by the need to develop a culture of disciples with a mission to disciple the world for Jesus Christ.

[26] Lewis, *Mere Christianity,* 196.

Conclusion

Finally, Steve Gladen serves as the Pastor of the Small Group Community for Saddleback Valley Community Church. In Gladen's guide, *Planning Small Groups with Purpose,* Rick Warren the founding pastor of the Saddleback Valley Community Church holds, "Kay and I started…a small group that met in the living room of our rented apartment, and [over forty years later]…there are over 7,000 small groups in ministry…through the intimate fellowship in our small groups that connects people to each other at the heart level."[27] I am informed by the urgency of the Great Commission from Jesus Christ to all of His followers in Matthew 28:19-20, NRSV, "**19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Thus, I affirm that a synergy between discipleship-making and Lewin's Change Theory is exactly what is needed at Journey of Faith to strike the match that will ignite a revival fire for souls.

Furthermore, at the most orthodox level, Dr. Dann Spader claims:

> [If a church] of 100 people each multiplied themselves into one other disciple who could also make disciples, and if you allowed each disciple three years to reproduce themselves, in ten years that church of 100 would become a church of 1,000. In twenty years would grow to more than 10,000.[28]

My goal is to unfreeze the current mentality of the ministry context in order to implement a Christ-centered priority [Matthew 4:18-22] for growth that equips and encourages each group to reach the next disciple(s) for Jesus Christ. The author suspects

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[27] Steve Gladen, *Planning Small Groups with Purpose: A Field-Tested Guide to Design and Grow Your Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018), 15.

[28] Dann L. Spader, *4 Chair Discipling: Growing a Movement of Disciple-Makers* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 103-104.

that the interdisciplinary dialogue across the project problem, Biblical, historical, and theological foundations properly confer with Lewin's Change Theory and the goal to facilitate a fire-filled discipling movement one group at a time.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The compilation of my work accomplished during the doctoral program revealed the topic of a project that proposed the existence of a synergy between the Journey of Faith and myself, that insisted on the need to develop a discipleship plan that invites anyone from any walk of life to engage in a discipleship pathway. More specifically, as a starting point for this project, I initially felt it necessary to invite men into small groups with a charge to commit to a rhythm of devotional life. My presupposition embodied a curiosity for studying how the ministry context would take shape when the men stepped to the frontline of accountable spiritual formation. Through the doctoral project, I hoped to gain further insight into the power of authentic discipleship. Notwithstanding, the foundational work exposed another issue across leadership that took precedence over the initial goal, and the result forced a pivot in my focus.

Christian discipleship at Journey of Faith is hampered because ministry leaders have not effectively provided discipleship opportunities to the membership. Therefore, I subscribe that if Christians lack effective Christian discipleship, they are less likely to properly disciple others and participate in other discipleship opportunities throughout the church. Thus, hypothetically, the project proposed that if ministry leaders of Journey of Faith Church in Humble, Texas, participated in the six-week Christian discipleship

training seminar, “Doing Life Together (DLT) Boot Camp: A Discipling Model For Cultural Change,” then they would learn methodologies to create and promote opportunities for Christian discipleship to the membership that will reshape the culture of Journey of Faith.

Moreover, the DLT Boot Camp was an invitation into fellowship, bonding, and training exercises I hoped to embark on a cycle of active pursuit into deeper spiritual formation. The foundations of the disciple-making intensive for servant leadership in the ministry context are grounded biblically, historically, theologically, and across the interdisciplinary foundation. Beyond such foundations, it necessitates theoretical underpinnings juxtaposed with scripture, church history, and systematic theology. The ultimate goal of the project is to use change culture to facilitate a discipleship culture at Journey of Faith.

Biblical Foundation

The relevance of the biblical text to the project proposal was guided by the simplicity and profundity of the passage, which provides significant details regarding the actions that Jesus took to secure and replicate his disciples. In that prioritizing active participation in Christian discipleship is treated as an option, juxtapose the obligation of the servant leader at Journey of Faith, an existential examination of the central thesis of Matthew 4:18-22. The scripture informs the recurring obligation of servant leaders by highlighting the motif of Jesus’ model for replicating disciples who will follow him across four actions as he a) travels to search for them, b) looks around to identify them, c) extends an urgent invitation to them, and d) repeats the first three actions by

demonstrating them for his disciples. As the narrative concludes, Jesus has fully engaged in his mission to replicate disciples as he makes his journey towards the cross for his final victory.

Historical Foundation

This chapter grants a peak at the journeys of John Wesley and his brother Charles, who managed to revolutionize the Christian world through their passion and desire to live and extend an invitation to others to live a life grounded in holiness. The effectiveness of Wesley's Holy Club at Oxford served as the precursor to the formation of widespread Wesleyan societies, producing two additional small group models called Class Meetings and Band Meetings that are hallmarks of Methodism. These ingenious models were developed for the purpose of creating a smaller gathering to encourage more intimate sharing and accountability. Moreover, a close examination of John and Charles Wesley's journey was necessary for the foundation of the doctoral project, considering Journey of Faith is a Global Methodist Church. Therefore, the project offers leaders an opportunity to lean into the halls of history and glean from some of the most significant events that snowballed into the Methodist Movement.

Theological Foundation

Seemingly, twenty-first-century culture is gaining more and more influence with today's generations, and the church bears the responsibility to implement a swift apologetic response less the theological framework of social media culture and other phenomena that continue to shape our cosmos improperly. Respected scholar C. S. Lewis

makes a claim for Christianity in his book, *Mere Christianity*, saying, "The Christian way is different: harder, and easier. Christ says, 'Give me All. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You."[1] Hence, the doctoral project was grounded within the premise of a theological framework informing the pathway to Jesus Christ's core invitation for an ongoing relationship with him.

Interdisciplinary Foundation

The interdisciplinary chapter proposed approaching the project at the intersection of what it means to be/become a disciple of Jesus Christ, theoretically filtered through Lewin's Change Theory (LCT), which is a three-stage model used to facilitate cultural change. LCT is typically expressed through the concept of unfreeze, change, and refreeze. Thus, the goal of the project was to unfreeze the current mentality of the ministry context to implement a Christ-centered priority (Matt. 4:18-22) for spiritual growth that equips and encourages each group to reach the next disciple(s) for Jesus Christ. The interdisciplinary dialogue across the project problem, biblical, historical, and theological foundations properly confer with Lewin's Change Theory and the goal to facilitate a fire-filled discipline movement one group at a time. For this reason, the project proposal is guided by a synergistic opportunity between disciple-making and Lewin's Change Theory to strike the match that will employ a disciplined culture, igniting a revival fire for souls.

[1] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1952), 196.

Methodology

This segment of the chapter will indicate the procedures used to recruit and solidify the volunteer participants for the research project. To solicit participants for the project, a letter and flyer regarding the DLT Boot Camp project were composed and circulated to the church via e-Blast, the Journey of Faith social media platforms, and physical copies were placed on the information table in the vestibule. Additionally, weekly announcements were made over the pulpit about the project and the need for twelve participants to sign up. The project required an eight-week solicitation process to ensure persons signing up had adequate time to review the project outline and respond with questions if necessary.

Moreover, providing an eight-week correspondence with a requirement to respond within the first four weeks allowed participants to decide whether the project was for them, providing another four weeks to solicit other participants before the project launch date should any of the initial volunteers decide not to participate. Once the participant slots were filled, consent forms were distributed to each of the twelve participants. In the interests of protecting the confidentiality of all participants, everyone was assigned a Greek letter by the principal investigator to identify participant submissions for data collection.

Participants were selected on a first-come-first-serve basis, and it was stressed that their names were not to be written on any of the materials to encourage transparency in their writings. In addition, they were assured that I was the only person who would have the key to identify them. As a requirement for this project, participants had to be eighteen or older and not a part of a protected or vulnerable class. The project exclusively

required volunteer participation, and no monetary compensation was provided. As such, participants were permitted to leave the group at any time for any reason without penalty. The group started with twelve participants and ended with ten participants, as two others dropped out. Every participant received a DLT Boot Camp backpack, which included a Journal Notebook (1) labeled with their Greek letter designation, a *4 Chair Discipling Workbook (1) from the Like Jesus Discipleship Series*, a DLT Outline, a 3/5 Notepad, pen, and highlighter.

The data collection methods for the DLT project included pre- and post-discipleship fitness survey questionnaires, journaling, and post-interview questions. Participants received individual links that included their assigned Greek letters to more adequately identify their entries. The pre-post surveys were created using Survey Monkey. However, one caveat with using Survey Monkey was that it required an annual minimum subscription at roughly $900 to access the compile feature. Thus, to compile all of the responses of the participants' pre- and post-surveys, I had to pivot by recreating the surveys in Google Forms, and this platform allowed me to use the participant's responses from Survey Monkey to manually input into the Google platform. This provided an alternative avenue for compiling all the individual responses into one place to assess both individual and collective data.

Journaling was used as a method to capture the more transparent responses of the participants. Each week, participants were provided with three to four questions to offer focal points for the reflections. Some participants preferred manually writing out their responses in the provided journals, and others preferred to type and submit their responses (including their Greek letter Identifier) electronically. On day one, everyone

was encouraged to use the journaling option that was more comfortable for them. Furthermore, post-interviews were employed as part of the project to capture the participants' verbal responses regarding their insights and participation in the seminar. The interviews were conducted virtually in Zoom and recorded for data collection for this project.

I engaged in preaching as another method to capture data by developing a sermon series in conjunction with the project titled "Doing Life Together Like Jesus." Each participant was provided with questions from week to week concerning the sermon as part of their journal reflections. In addition, weekly prayer and Bible study sessions were conducted to assist with capturing the data. Moreover, to facilitate change culture on the praxis of discipleship as the obligation of every believer, the project included the "Who's Your Neighbor Weekly Check-in," a missional project outing to the Houston Food Bank, and a Friday Night Fellowship outing.

Security measures were implemented to safeguard all materials to maintain confidentiality while collecting, storing, recording, and disposing of research materials. This was accomplished by storing all materials in a locked cabinet in the office of the principal investigator. Additional materials are stored on my laptop in the same office cabinet when not with me. All materials have been digitized and stored on my laptop for the purpose of data analysis. All materials will remain secure on the laptop and in the cabinet and will be properly disposed of after a period of three years of graduating from UTS. The project used a qualitative research methodology to collect data to measure the project's outcome. Using the qualitative research methodology, the project captured an

objectively clear and concise understanding of whether disciple-making has been effective or not in our context.

Implementation

Basic Combat Training (or Boot Camp as it is commonly known) is required of all newly enlisted soldiers to create a strong foundation for their military experience and future goals. The goal is threefold, which is to build you up, help you discover your inner strength, and equip you to succeed in life. It is intense, challenging, and designed to push each soldier to become the best version of themselves mentally and physically.[2] As soldiers of God's Army, our call is not much different. For this reason, the DLT Boot Camp was designed to invite disciples of Jesus Christ on every level into an intense six-week fellowship, bonding, and training exercise that will hopefully propel them into a cycle of deeper spiritual formation. The DLT training sessions began Sunday, June 30, 2024, at Journey of Faith Church in Humble, Texas. The project began by discussing Jesus's invitation to the first of his disciples according to Matthew 4:18-22, NRSV.

As a precursor to the implementation of the project entitled "Doing Life Together Boot Camp: A Discipling Model for Cultural Change," an informal in-person meeting with the professional associates was scheduled. All four of them were informed in full of the approved project and the process for arriving at the proposed project starting with summaries of my autobiography and ending with the project proposal. In addition, space was made to lay out the project and the interconnections of the sermon series. At the recommendation of one of the professional associates, two of them and one

[2] U. S. Army, "Basic Training," U.S. Army, https://www.goarmy.com/army-life/basic-training.html.

nonprofessional associate accepted the invitation to preach an assigned text as guest preachers for three separate Sunday Worship services during the implementation of said project.

The professional associates provided feedback and recommendations on maximizing the criteria outlined in the six-week seminar. The participants received an official welcome email with details to prepare for the start of the project. Additionally, an informal virtual orientation to the project was organized to meet with the participants a few days before day one of the project. Participants were instructed to complete the pre-survey prior to arriving on Sunday morning for our official first gathering, and links to the pre-surveys were sent out separately to each participant immediately following the orientation.

Week One:

The first day of DLT Boot Camp was Sunday, June 30, 2024. On day one of week one, we met in person at the church from 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m., opening the Zoom for two participants who could not meet in person on Sundays due to work. The Zoom session was recorded, and we began with an opening with prayer. We took time to make introductions. The purpose was given, and the scriptural significance to the project was given. Critical to this detailed description was the need to present the problem statement and hypothesis which states that Christian discipleship at Journey of Faith is hampered because ministry leaders have not effectively provided discipleship opportunities to the membership.

Thus, hypothetically the project proposed that if ministry leaders of Journey of Faith Church in Humble, Texas participated in the six-week Christian discipleship training seminar, “Doing Life Together (DLT) Boot Camp: A Discipling Model For Cultural Change,” then they would learn methodologies to create and promote opportunities for Christian discipleship to the membership that will reshape the culture of Journey of Faith.

The “Who’s Your Neighbor Weekly Check-in” was introduced to the group. Each week every group member was responsible for learning one thing about two of their brothers or sisters in Christ and then sharing that one thing during our group meeting the following week. The sermon titled, “And They Followed Part 1,” from the project’s foundational pericope in Matthew 4.18-22, focused on Jesus’ first disciples and their willingness to drop everything and follow Jesus. The participants received a sneak peak of the sermon during the morning session and were welcomed to the front seat of the sermon as the text was ministered to the wider congregation. This was intentional to provide the participants with a glimpse of how the disciples journeyed with Jesus during his life and ministry on earth. The conclusion of this session included providing reflection prompts for journaling and reviewing the first assignment for the upcoming Bible Study on day two of week one.

Wednesday, July 03, 2024, was day two of week two consisted of gathering virtually via Zoom from 5:00 a.m. – 6:00 a.m. for prayer and the assigned Bible study lesson, “Where It All Began,” after watching the video companion to the lesson. This first week was tough for practically all the participants, as they were being challenged to sign on and engage in prayer and Bible study at 5:00 a.m. The intention behind this early

meeting was to literally challenge them to live into the words of the psalmist (Ps. 63:1), who said, “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.” The second reason was to expose them to how refreshing and empowering it is to start the day with devotion. I affirm that such a practice highly impacts one’s endeavors daily, weekly, monthly, and annually.

The themes that arose out of lesson one focused the participant’s attention on the message of Jesus, the method of Jesus, and Jesus’ model for disciple-making. As we engaged in the lesson, participants were eager to understand the simplicity of Jesus’ message and his methodical approach to relational ministry, starting with a few as he prioritized personal time for prayer, loving sinners, and winning the lost. One critical driver in our effort to inform the participants of what true discipleship means is an understanding that growing as a disciple also means reaching and inviting others to become followers of Jesus as we grow. When asked, most participants thought that making disciples was something done after you mature spiritually and not as you grow spiritually. Thus, this point was stressed throughout the weekly meetings.

After our meeting, the participants were invited to volunteer as co-facilitator for the next week. One of the participants gladly accepted the invitation, and the meeting was closed with prayer. Once again, this session was recorded via Zoom.

Week Two:

Sunday, July 07, 2024, day one of week two. The session was held in person, and the Zoom meeting was launched again for the two participants who could not meet in

person on Sundays due to work. The Zoom session was recorded as we opened with prayer. The Friday Fellowship Outing was coordinated which took place on day three of week four. The goal of the outing was to remind the participants that walking with Jesus means enjoying life and engaging in life-giving fun activities outside of the four walls of the church.

Fellowship with one another also means getting to know your fellow disciples. It was great to witness everyone sharing something about the person they chose to learn and share with over the week during the "Who's Your Neighbor Weekly Check-in." In addition, participants gladly shared brief reflections on their encounters with the lessons, sermon impressions, and daily experiences. These reflections opened the conversation up to the sermon topic "And They Followed Part 2," Matthew 4.18-22. Part two of the sermon focused on our mandate as disciples of Jesus to forsake all and follow him. Participants collectively indicated the importance of prioritizing spiritual formation. It was evident that their stance was informed by the lessons from week one. In conclusion of our gathering, the sermon points were reiterated with a charge to the participants to make note of what they heard. Reflection prompts for journaling were provided along with instructions to review lesson two for the upcoming Bible Study on day two of week two. In our closing prayer, we covered all who would be affected by Hurricane Beryl as we braced for its arrival.

On Monday morning, July 08, 2024, Hurricane Beryl made landfall in Southeast Texas, and as a result, the Houston Metroplex was suddenly shut down. Without power, this event forced us to shift dates, and other plans for the project are noted hereinafter. While most of the congregation of Journey of Faith sustained minimal damage, one of the

participant's cars was totaled after a large tree crushed it. Yet, despite this situation, the participant did not allow a lack of transportation to stand in their way. In lieu, it encouraged a yearning desire in that person and the rest of the participants to regroup and push forward with the project. Unfortunately, this shift forced us to forgo our plans to have three guest pastors proclaim the Good News as their obligations shifted to tend to their congregations. Moreover, the challenges surrounding power being restored across the area forced us to omit our Wednesday morning 5:00 a.m. session (July 10th) and Sunday worship on July 14, 2024.

Wednesday, July 17, 2024, was day two of week two was held virtually at 5:00 a.m. via Zoom a little over a week after Hurricane Beryl made its arrival on July 8th. Everyone's power was finally restored, and the participants were surprisingly delighted at the opportunity to rise early to seek God before getting started with the remainder of their day. The Zoom session was recorded, and the co-facilitator opened with prayer. The topic of study from chapter two of *4 Chair Discipling* was, "The Full Humanity of Jesus." The content of this lesson informed the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ. An examination of Christ's divine and human natures was eye-opening for the participants. Inquiry into the deeper meaning of the two natures of Jesus was informed by Gregory of Nazianzus, who said, "If Christ did not become fully human, then His redemption of man could not have been fully complete."[3] After our meeting, the co-facilitator invited participants to volunteer as co-facilitator for next week. Another one of the participants gladly accepted the invitation, and the session closed with prayer.

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[3] Dann L. Spader, *4 Chair Discipling: Growing a Movement of Disciple-Makers* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 25.

Week Three:

Sunday, July 21, 2024, was day one of week three opened in prayer at the in-person session, and I discussed the Fellowship Outing Reminder. Next, the group spent twenty minutes on the "Who's Your Neighbor Weekly Check-in". This week's check-in was especially critical in light of everyone being in the middle of regrouping for the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl. The group's focus was directed towards planning the Mission Project to serve as a group at the Houston Food Bank. The sermon for this Sunday was, "How Else Will They Know," Romans 10:13-15 (emphasis on v. 14). The content of this sermon focuses on the partnership between discipleship and evangelism, and the disciple's obligation to share the Good News of Jesus Christ even as we grow and are growing.

Wednesday, July 24, 2024, was day two. Day two of week three consisted of opening with early morning prayer at 5:00 a.m. Next, the designated facilitator engaged in the devotional lesson. Topic of Study: *4 Chair Discipling: Chapter Three — Our Mission and Motive*. Engagement in the lesson was such that it ran over our one-hour limit, and the group decided to finish up on Sunday (Week Four, Day One).

Week Four:

Sunday, July 28, 2024, was day one of week four. The session opened with prayer and a review of the previous devotional lesson from week three, after a few minutes of "Who's Your Neighbor Weekly Check-in." Unfortunately, the project plans for a retreat on the church campus before attending the missional outing due to time constraints on the end of the participants and the venue because Hurricane Beryl had shifted the project

back one week. So, in planning the group agreed to commit to serving at the Houston Food Bank as part of fulfilling the project objective to serve together. The sermon was "God's Looking For You," 1 Samuel 13:14. The content of this sermon focused on the person who has a heart after God's own heart, much like David. Someone, who is ready to be connected to the wants, desires, and purposes of God's heart.

Wednesday, July 31, 2024, day two of week four, encompassed opening with prayer at 5:00 a.m. and engaging in the assigned Devotional Lesson. Topic of Study: *4 Chair Discipling: Chapter Four — The Method — an Overview*. The designated participant for this week's meeting opened with prayer and led the devotional lesson.

August 09, 2024, day three was rescheduled from Friday, August 01, 2024, due to the need to travel to a homegoing service for a family member. Nevertheless, on Friday, August 09th, the group gathered at Pinstripes bowling alley and engaged in a time of fellowship, fun, and games outside of the four walls of the church building. Two of the ten participants could not attend due to schedule conflicts.

Week Five:

Sunday, August 04, 2024, day one of week five consisted of opening with prayer and spending forty minutes conducting "Who's Your Neighbor Weekly Check-in," and reflections from the fellowship outing. The sermon focus was, "I Appointed You To Go and Bear Fruit," John 15:1-17 (emphasis v.16). There was a charge to bear the fruit of the Kingdom of God. Every believer is charged to always make disciples as followers (fruit/offspring) of Jesus Christ.

Wednesday, August 07, 2024, day two of week five, the co-facilitators opened the 5:00 a.m. session with prayer and spent fifty minutes in the devotional lesson. Topic of Study: *4 Chair Discipling: Chapter Five — Chair 1: The Lost.*

Saturday, August 31, 2024, was rescheduled from Friday, August 17, 2024, due to another homegoing service for a church member of Journey of Faith. In light of having to coordinate schedules outside of the originally planned dates for the project, the group met on Saturday, August 31st at the Houston Food Bank and served a four-hour time slot. Some of the participants were encouraged to even bring their children along as an opportunity to model serving together with brothers and sisters in Christ and giving back to the community through service opportunities.

Week Six:

Sunday, August 11, 2024, day one of week six consisted of one final check-in and reflections on the missional outing at the Houston Food Bank. Each of the participants then completed the Post-Discipleship Fitness Assessment Surveys to assess each group member's discipleship progress, if any, from participating in the six-week seminar. A final charge was given to the group, and the group identified two additional facilitators to walk with the pastor in facilitating a new life group from this group. At the end of the session, journals were collected and locked up for analysis. The sermon topic, "The Potter Touched Me," Jeremiah 18:1-11, focused on what it means to understand how the Great Potter is shaping us in His hands for a greater purpose in this earthly realm.

Exit Interviews

Exit interviews were held from Tuesday, August 27, 2024, through Friday, August 30, 2024. The interviews were held in fifteen to twenty-minute slots. The interviews were one-on-one with each participant. Then I determined impact of weekly group check-ins and reflections by compiling journal notes from each week.

Summary of Learning

Five individuals of the collective ten participants serve in various leadership roles at Journey of Faith Church-Humble from the Board of Stewards (Church Council) to Missions, Nurture and Care Ministry, Worship and Arts, and e Journey Kids and TrailBlazer Youth Ministries. The additional five serve in other capacities on ministry teams throughout the church. While the participants ranged in age from early thirties to late fifties, I hoped to have some younger participants in their twenties to take the journey through this seminar.

The following data captures a synopsis of the materials collected during the six-week discipling seminar. Participants were required to complete a pre-and post-survey, submit journal entries from week to week, and complete an exit interview. Some of the participants took full advantage of expressing their reflections in the journal entries, and some only seemingly completed the minimum. Nevertheless, enough data was collected to compile a summary for each week.

Pre- and Post-Survey Questions to Assess the Servant Leader's Spiritual Progress

The pre- and post-survey questions are designed at a basic level to provide insight as to where the participants are in their spiritual formation as disciples of Jesus Christ. It helped to gain a peek into how each participant understands the invitation into a relationship with Jesus Christ as one of his disciples. It is important to note that the pre-survey data is a collection of eleven responses (of the twelve initial participants). One other participant never completed the pre-surveys, as the withdrew from the program, and the eleventh participant withdrew shortly after the first week. Thus, no additional data was collected from either of the two, and the post-surveys reflect ten responses from the remaining participants.

There are five questions influenced by the *Like Jesus* discipleship curriculum by Dr. Dan Spader. These included the following: Are you confident that you will be with God in heaven after this life? Religious acts like going to church, reading my Bible, or following religious rules do not make me a Christian. There is only one way to God and that is through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. I am consistently developing the priorities of Christ daily (Love God and Love People…Matt. 22:37-39). I am consistently putting Christ first in every area of my life (time, money, relationships).[4]

Are you confident that you will be with God in heaven after this life?

This question seeks to assess the participant's understanding of where they are in their relationship with Jesus Christ concerning the gift of eternal life. It is critical for any believer to understand the depth of the spiritual life and have assurance that they are on

[4] Clear Design Group, "Like Jesus," Apple App Store, Vers. 2.1.9 (2024), https://apps.apple.com/us/app/like-jesus-app/id1435329196.

the right path to attaining eternal life with the Father. Out of eleven responses, the pre-survey indicated that 90.9% of the participants were confident that they would be with God in heaven after this life, while 9.1% were unsure. On the other hand, at the end of the six-week intensive, ten responses to the same question on the post-survey indicate that 100% of the participants were confident that they would be with God in heaven after this life.

Religious acts like going to church, reading my Bible, or following religious rules do not make me a Christian.

This question was used to assess the participant's understanding of what or how their relationship with Christ is defined. The Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 3:28, "For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law." Thus, it is not the acts or deeds that make us Christian, rather Paul asserts that our Christianity is justified by faith. The participants' pre-survey responses indicated that 45.5% agreed that these acts do not make them Christian, 36.4% disagreed asserting that they believe these acts make them Christian, and 18.2% were unsure. While the post-survey reveals that 60% of the participants agreed, 40% disagreed after six weeks of learning. Which presents a future opportunity to teach and preach on this subject matter.

There is only one way to God and that is through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

This question affirms the participants' understanding of the pathway of salvation at the most fundamental level. It should be noted that all the participants practically grew up in the church as children, and therefore, at the fundamental level they all understood this question and affirmed their belief that there is only way to God through faith in His

Son, Jesus Christ. Both on the pre-and post-surveys, all the participants agreed with this statement 100%.

I am consistently developing the priorities of Christ daily (Love God and Love People…Matthew 22:37-39).

Every believer needs to continue maturing as a disciple. Thus, the dual purpose of this question was to inquire about the participant's status and invite them to reflect on what this question means for their walk with Christ. The pre-survey highlighted that 90.9% are improving in this area of their relationship, while only 9.1% assert that they are strong in this area. After six weeks of training the post-survey revealed that 70% were improving in this area, and 30% felt stronger for a 20% decrease of those that were improving in this area. None of the participants considered themselves to be weak in this area.

I am consistently putting Christ first in every area of my life (time, money, relationships).

Matthew 6:33 (NIV) extends an invitation to all disciples, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." This is the ongoing growth area for every believer, and the pre-survey revealed that 9.1% felt they were weak in this area, 72.7% believe they are improving, and 18.2% were strong in this area. On the other hand, six weeks in the Doing Life Together Boot Camp reveals that 60% feel they are still improving, and 40% assert they were stronger in this area as highlighted in the post-survey.

Analysis of Journals

Given the pre and post-surveys provided some preliminary insight into the participants' engagement in their spiritual walk with Christ, journaling was used as a method to capture the more transparent responses of the participants. Each week participants were provided three to four questions to offer focal points for the reflections. Some participants preferred manually writing out their responses in the provided journals, and others preferred to type and submit their responses (including their Greek letter Identifier) electronically. Each week everyone was encouraged to write and express themselves as freely as they wanted, using the journaling option that was more comfortable for them.

Journal Theme from Entry — Beta

"I hope to gain spiritual connection and confidence from this seminar." Jesus searches for His disciples and identifies His disciples. He then invites them to follow Him. Jesus demonstrates for His disciples. I also heard, "repent, and follow Him." Also, "Love one another. Be fishers of men." It pushed me into action this week to be more aware of God's voice and to listen, to follow, and mostly to trust what God has for me this week. It has pushed me to spread God's word and to hone my discipleship skills to become the disciple of Christ in, which he desires of me. God has to deconstruct us to be rebuilt and "reconstructed."

"I seized the opportunity to invite a co-worker…to be my special guest." I was motivated to share Jesus with them because we were having a rough day at work. I was inspired by my neighbors' story about staying positive post-storm [Hurricane Beryl].

Sharing resources and uplifting conversations. I shared Christ with someone while at Walmart, checking out. I was challenged this week by the post-storm effects happening at work. There were complaints, concerns, and conditions that had to be dealt with. It impacted me because while reassurances were extended to our clients, I still had to preserve energy while dealing with the personal conditions of my home and protections for my family. I was stretched but I knew that God would carry me. Participating in the DLTBC has affected my faith in a good way. It is pushing my boundaries like never before. My perspective is changing my walk with Christ by knowing I am growing in Christ and becoming a disciple of Him. This helps change my walk to one with more spiritual confidence."

Journal Theme from Entry — Gamma

"I am looking for the Pastor to provide me with the teaching tools so that I may walk closer with God, my wife, kids, mother, family members, family, church family, friends, and coworkers. I found it interesting that when the Pastor, read the part where Jesus walked and saw two brothers fishing, and he just told them to stop fishing and follow him, and he would make them fishers of people. He also asked two more people to follow him, and he made those his first four disciples. It was not based on education he treated them all as equals, Understanding Jesus' Humanity. This experience illuminated the struggles Jesus faced, despite His divine nature. It reminded me that even the Son of God walked alongside people, sharing their experiences. This realization has encouraged me to approach my faith with greater empathy and understanding.

However, I have grown spiritually in so many ways. I have started a little disciple group where I send out Bible verses and explain how the verse is dealing with me. I did it for about two weeks, and now in this same group, we have like sixty brothers and every day we pass the responsibility and accountability to another brother and he has to take charge and do it for seven days, and I have been so surprised at the involvement level that I read in this group text of support and feedback."

Journal Theme from Entry — Delta

"I hope to gain a deeper relationship with Christ to better understand Jesus' teachings and learn a better way to bring more people to Christ. We are all dealing with things; life is hard. This week, I am trying to be mindful of others and their struggles despite my personal feelings. In doing this, I find myself to be more open for me to love others. If I get out of my way, I feel I will have a better outcome in being a better disciple of Christ and making more disciples.

For this week, we are expecting Hurricane Beryl, and for me, an impending storm would cause such anxiety, and I would be all over the place. But I can say inviting the Holy Spirit more often weekly has given me a sense of calm during life's storms. I sensed God, saying you and your family will be ok during this storm. Basically, using a God lens in my life. I enjoyed the fellowship outing with my fellow boot campers, and it was good to do so outside of a church setting. The camaraderie between the group was most engaging to me. Volunteering at the Houston Food Bank was a deeply enriching experience, and it contributed to my personal growth in three ways:

• Interacting with individuals from various backgrounds and hearing their stories

• Collaborating with people from different walks of life

• Knowing that my efforts are making a tangible difference in someone's life has provided a profound sense of fulfillment and purpose."

Journal Theme from Entry — Epsilon

"From the sermon, "And They Followed Him Part 2," I heard you as a believer allowed yourself to be intimidated or ashamed to share your testimony with others about what Jesus is for you, has done for you, and how Jesus saved you. If you are ashamed of me, how am I supposed to speak up for you? For every believer to emulate when truly committing yourselves to follow Jesus Christ: we learn this that Jesus demonstrated for his disciples. I was able to see an opportunity to invite someone when I was at Kroger. I was motivated to share my experience with Jesus because I used the Four Chair Disciples process: Follow, Look, and Ask.

Where did I share Christ with someone this past week? I shared Christ with a person I met in line at the Texas Health and Human Services. My participation has motivated me to do more. My perspective has changed a lot because I am more eager to speak about the word of the Lord to others I do not [normally] associate with. The three areas that challenged me were forgiveness, patience, and trust. This has been a challenge for me because it is between me and a family member. I have noticed a change in me because my family members and I are getting alone."

Journal Theme from Entry — Eta

"I hope to learn how to be a better disciple. I would like to draw closer to God and learn more about Jesus. I want to strengthen my faith and trust in God. I shared a little Jesus figurine [that Pastor Stephen gave us to share] with total strangers. I gave a homeless man a "Little Jesus" that was standing outside of Walmart. He looked at the "little Jesus" and said, "Thank you, we can all use a little Jesus." We have to make time for God and study to show ourselves approved. How can we share Jesus and we do not know him? We have to help ourselves to be able to help others. We must do our part. The pastor said something in his sermon that stuck with me when he said, "Will you use the gospel to declare that God is? Or are you only open on Sundays?" We have to make time and not be ashamed to share about God. Being a disciple is not just a one-day-a-week job that we perform on Sundays. It is an everyday, every opportunity job."

Journal Theme from Entry — Theta

"While being a part of this DLT class, I want to grow more wisdom and knowledge on how to disciple. I shared Christ with my family on this Sunday. Some of them do not attend church. So, if they come to my home on Sundays, I reteach what the Pastor has taught on that Sunday. Every time God allows us to come together, I learn something new or I am reminded of something. It makes me pray a little harder. I want to be able to share more. Every time I hear the word of God, it increases my faith. As a participant in the DLT class, I feel like I am walking closer to Christ as I learn more about the word of God. The Lord gave me an opportunity to serve, along with Pastor Goldsmith, in teaching one of the lessons. It was a blessing to me and others. I am proven

in my boldness now that I know the correct way to disciple. I feel much better because I am following Jesus's example according to Matthew 4:18-22."

Journal Theme from Entry — Iota

"What do I hope to gain from this seminar? A greater understanding of discipling. Become a better disciple and revelation of what God has for me. Do not be ashamed of my journey and sharing Christ or my testimony because it will help others. I invited a sales representative I met. I could see he needed a little more Jesus. He was excited and stated he would take me up on the offer this year. I was inspired to further motivate my neighbor to keep going and prophesy the goodness of God. I shared Christ with a friend over the phone. We prayed, and she agreed to meet with me biweekly for disciplining. Confirmation that my belief in God will be inspired by his presence in my life. Nothing is a coincidence. My faith walk was recharged. I know even my purpose God's plan or path for me, and that my life and sure essence was and is, in some ways, still under attack. I will not be less than what and who God has called me to be."

Journal Theme from Entry — Kappa

"I am hoping to gain a deeper understanding of the true meaning of discipleship, and to sharpen my knowledge in the word and things of Christ. I was particularly pricked on the "Jesus searches" piece when Pastor Goldsmith said we attempt to police the people that we are called to disciple and pull into the fold because WE want to look down our noses at folks, and it is not right!!! I can facilitate drop-offs and pick-ups for five or six teen boys on my son's football team. They love asking me random life questions just to

see what I will say or how much I know about their culture! No matter what they ask, I answer. I always make it a priority to find a way to invite them to church, share Jesus, and ask them if they pray and talk to God even if they are not in a church setting.

Much to my surprise, many of them do not know how to pray or do not attend church. Just recently, one of the young men came to church and was able to assist in the AV booth and thoroughly enjoyed it. He mentioned that usually he would fall asleep in church but that he was engaged and understood the sermon and that made me very happy! So now all the other boys are asking when they can come to church! I will gladly pack my car full of young men open and thirsty for GOD! This whole process has just blown my mind. I can truly say that I am being stretched and empowered with knowledge, principles, and perspectives that I had not heard of and or considered before now."

Journal Theme from Entry — Lambda

"I hope to gain a deeper understanding of God's word and learn how to apply it to my daily life. I honestly do not know when God is speaking to me. I have never really just sat quietly and tried to listen to his voice. I can sense his presence in my life, but I am not quite sure what his plans are for my life. I have been feeling like a failure and like my life is not what I had expected, and the sermon made me realize that, although I do not feel like my life is on the right path, I am blessed.

I have been sharing how good God is/was to my family and me during Hurricane Varro via social media and through conversations with friends and family. I remember standing at the window watching a huge tree sway back and forth between me and my

neighbor's house. All I could do was pray. I prayed for the safety of both my family and my neighbors, and not long after my prayer was finished, I watched God orchestrate the fall of that tree perfectly into the open walkway of my neighbor's patio, missing both their home and my home causing minor damage. I do not know how many times I shared that story with someone, but I do know that moment solidified my faith and showed me the power of prayer!"

Journal Theme from Entry — Mu

"I hope to gain more knowledge on discipleship and become closer to the follower that God wants me to be. There is a mission for every believer to draw closer to Christ and fish for other souls. I was pushed to action this week by sharing knowledge with some who were confused as to the difference between God and the universe. Where did I see or seize the opportunity to invite special guests to service? I did so well on the phone as I chopped it up with a buddy of mine on how cool Pastor Goldsmith is, and how easily he breaks things down to understand. My participation in the DLT seminar has sharpened my faith to be quite honest. It is true that I have a scramble to schedule, but it is not so busy that I cannot sit down and give Christ his time. As a result of the fellowship outing, I learned something important, and that was that believers can have a good time outside of the church without having to enter a sinful atmosphere. The area that I saw God moving most of the last six weeks was in my marriage because my wife and I spent way more time learning together than we have in a while."

Post-Interview Questions to Assess the Servant Leader's Experience

How do you perceive your current engagement in the ministry activities within the church beyond Sunday morning worship gatherings (e.g., proactively enlisting to serve, lead groups, and serve in outreach programs)?

This question was purposed to assess the participants' level of active participation through the life of the ministry. There were three options for responding including: a) Weak, b) Improving, and c) Strong. It allows the participants to think introspectively about how they engage in the life of the church beyond Sunday gatherings for worship. I hope to prompt them to look at how they can engage at an even deeper level. Considering most of this group currently serve on the leadership team at Journey of Faith, eight of them responded that they felt strongly about their engagement in other activities in the life of JOF. Leaving only two to respond that they were improving.

Do you actively attend and participate in Bible Study or a small group at the church? Why or why not?

Participation in spiritual formation opportunities is critical, and I sought to inquire about the participants' involvement in a Bible Study class or small group. Three of the participants currently participate in a virtual Bible Study as part of other ministries, considering the fact the Journey of Faith only currently offers one 10:00 a.m. class. Most are not able to attend this class due to work schedules and other caretaking responsibilities. However, they indicated they would be open to participating in an evening class should the opportunity arise. The consensus was to have an in-person class or small group. Nevertheless, they are open to a virtual opportunity as well. In their responses, all ten of the participants indicated the significant impact that the weekly Wednesday morning virtual devotional lessons had on them. Most indicated it was rough

at first getting up for a 5:00 a.m. class, but they all began looking forward to the early morning meetings and felt that seeking God's face early shifted their moods and perspectives daily in a spiritually refreshing way.

Would you say that your concern for those who do not know Jesus and your desire to share Him with them is?[5]

Mark 12:30-31 (NIV) says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." This question seeks to identify the participant's concern for others who may or may not know the love of Jesus. Again, there were three options for responding including: a) Weak, b) Improving, and c) Strong. In responding, five of the participants indicated that they were improving in this area, and the other five revealed that they felt strong in this area.

Is your intentional pursuit for opportunities to share the gospel message verbally with spiritually lost people?

Again, there were three options for responding including: a) Weak, b) Improving, and c) Strong. This question seeks to inquire into the participant's proactive engagement in reaching others for Jesus Christ, and one participant indicated they felt they were still weak in this area. Six indicated they were improving and another three affirmed they were strong in this area of sharing and spreading the Good News.

[5] Clear Design Group, "Like Jesus," Apple App Store, Vers. 2.1.9 (2024), https://apps.apple.com/us/app/like-jesus-app/id1435329196.

How do you perceive your ability to communicate your salvation story well (your testimony)?[6]

According to Revelation 12:11a-b (NIV), we as believers overcome the adversaries hold on our lives by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. Thus, communicating our testimony or our salvation story is critical not only for those with whom we are sharing it but, more importantly, for our growth as well. The more we share, the more we grow! Once again, there were three options for responding, including: a) Weak, b) Improving, and c) Strong. Therefore, six of the participants affirmed that they are improving in this area of communicating their testimonies, while the other four assert that they are strong in this area of articulating their journey in relationship with Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Christian discipleship at Journey of Faith is hampered because ministry leaders have not effectively provided discipleship opportunities to the membership. Therefore, if Christians lack effective Christian discipleship, they are less likely to properly disciple others and participate in other discipleship opportunities throughout the church. Thus, hypothetically the project proposed that if ministry leaders of Journey of Faith Church in Humble, Texas participated in the six-week Christian discipleship training seminar, "Doing Life Together (DLT) Boot Camp: A Discipling Model For Cultural Change," then they would learn methodologies to create and promote opportunities for Christian discipleship to the membership that will reshape the culture of Journey of Faith.

[6] Clear Design Group, "Like Jesus," Apple App Store, Vers. 2.1.9 (2024), https://apps.apple.com/us/app/like-jesus-app/id1435329196.

During the six weeks of teaching, preaching, dialoguing, fellowship, and missional opportunities, pre-and post-surveys, journaling, and exit interviews, the project proved, first and foremost, that there is a desire amongst ministry leaders and laity alike to grow in the relationship with Jesus; given the right opportunity. Thankfully, most of the challenges (minor as they were) that caused a shift in some components of the project arose early on. Such included having to abandon an all-day Saturday retreat on the church campus as part of the missional project outing due to schedule conflicts due to Hurricane Beryl. Nonetheless, the data collected unapologetically supports the hypothesis.

In addition, since participating in the DLT Boot Camp, the participants are taking a significant leap forward into intentional engagement in other areas of the life of the church as a means of investing in their spiritual growth. Beyond this seminar, I will walk with the group as *Life Group* to finish all three books of the *Like Jesus* curriculum over the next three years. Moreover, some of the participants have also agreed to facilitate a DLT Boot Camp to walk subsequent cohorts through the seminar, and therefore forming ongoing *Life Groups*.

The goal is to corral the membership of Journey of Faith, current, new, and or potential members, into this disciple-making model, creating a recurring cycle of searching for new disciples, identifying new disciples, extending an invitation to others to follow Jesus, and repeating the first three steps while demonstrating them for the newer disciples even as we are continually growing more like Christ. The data proves that a six-week intensive generates genuine curiosity, excitement, and a desire to know more about Jesus while demonstrating that spiritual growth within the ministry context and the community is possible in a short span. Thus, continuing to do life (fellowship and

learning) with this and future groups will produce a multiplicity of fruitful laborers for the sake of expanding the kingdom.

If I could redo this project, it would be designed as an eight-week project. Largely because by week four, the participants began to exhibit a light bulb engagement in the seminar. Even despite juggling the challenges presented in the aftermath of the hurricane, something clicked for the participants. Perhaps it was because events like that tend to bring the community closer to help each other. Nonetheless, at six weeks, the seminar was over, and the sessions had been so enlightening that the group insisted on the opportunity to continue walking together. In addition, I would have liked to have at least two Baby Boomers or older participate in the project and at least two more millennials. Lastly, I would have written in time to go over each participant's responses to the pre- and post-surveys during their exit interviews to demonstrate the impact of the short-term seminar on spiritual formation.

Finally, some critical questions that should have been included are: Do you have any suggestions on how the seminar could be improved? What did you not like about the seminar? What did you like most about your participation in this seminar? Did this seminar help you understand discipleship and your responsibility to continually make disciples as you go and grow? How did it make you feel when sharing Jesus with others? What were you thinking at that moment? Additionally, I would have asked the co-facilitators: How was your experience with facilitating a devotional lesson? How does this affirm you as a growing disciple? What did you like or not like about facilitating?

One final thought to share is that the participants provided more than enough data to analyze and reconcile. The project provides a glimpse of the possibilities to come by

implementing the Doing Life Together Boot Camp model within the ministry context. It is needed and necessary to promote and nurture cultural kingdom change.

APPENDIX A

BOOT CAMP SCHEDULE

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Week 1: June 30, 2024 — Reception: The Call to DLT Boot Camp

Day 1

- Meet weekly with a (pre-selected) group of ten to twelve individuals in-person.
- 10 minutes Administer Pre-Discipleship Fitness Assessment Surveys to assess each group members discipleship stage (Day 1 of week 1).
- 15 minutes Describe the purpose and scriptural significance of the DLT (Doing Life Together) Boot Camp (Day 1 of week 1).
- 15 minutes Outline the six-week journey and establish covenant guide for accountability to the group (Day 1 of week 1).
- 10 minutes Introduce — Who's Your Neighbor Weekly Check-in: Each week every group member will be responsible for learning one thing about two of their brothers/sisters in Christ and will check in with that one thing during each of our group meetings. We should know four to six things about each other (that we probably did not know) at the end of our time together (Day 1 of week 1).
- 10 minutes to collect journals (Day 1 of week 1).

Day 2

- 30 minutes Early Morning Prayer Microsoft Teams/Call one-day per week (Day 2 of week 1).
- 30 minutes Devotional/Bible Lesson with prompts and assignments for next week. (right after prayer once a week) We will use *Like Jesus, 4 Chair Discipling* by Dr. Dann Spader as our curriculum. Participants will be required to purchase the curriculum (Day 2 of week 1).
- NOTE: Pastor leads prayer and devotional for week one. Topic of Study: *4 Chair Discipling: Chapter One — Where It All Began (p.11).* Pastor will identify a different participant weekly that will co-lead the devotional the following week.

Week 2: July 07, 2024 — Module One: DLT Basic Discipleship Training (Becoming the Disciple)

Day 1

- 5 minutes Outing Announcement: Group will identify a place to hang-out for fellowship together for a day/night of fun-filled activities for week 4 (Day 1 of week 2).
- 40 minutes Who's Your Neighbor Weekly Check-in: top of each week (Day 1 of week 2).
- 10 minutes Q&A regarding personal insights (Day 1 of week 2).
- 10 minutes to collect journals (Day 1 of week 2).

1.

2. **Day 2**

- 30 minutes Early Morning Prayer Microsoft Teams/Call one-day per week (Day 2 of week 2).
- 30 minutes Devotional/Bible Lesson with prompts and assignments for next week (Day 2 of week 2).

- 60 minutes Pastor and Participant #1 leads prayer and devotional week two with pre-assigned pericope. Topic of Study: *4 Chair Discipling: Chapter Two — The Full Humanity of Jesus (p.19).* (Day 2 of week 2).

3.

Week 3: July 21, 2024 — Module 2: DLT Basic Fellowship Training (Group Social Outing)

Day 1

- 5 minutes Outing Reminder: Group pre-planned two-hour fellowship outing announcement. (Friday or Saturday of week 4).
- 20 minutes Who's Your Neighbor Weekly Check-in: top of each week (Day 1 of week 3).
- 10 minutes Retreat (JOF Church Campus) and Mission Project Planning: Pastor in concert with the group will schedule a local mission project/opportunity for the group to serve at together week 5 (Preferably a Saturday at the Houston Food Bank, Homeless Shelter, etc.). Participants will seize this opportunity to model the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in service alongside each other and community members (Day 1 of week 3)!
- 5 minutes Two Pairs of Fishers: In week three the group leader(s) will prayerfully discern two fishers (Matt. 4:18-22) that will continue walking with this DLT Group at the culmination of the Boot Camp; while inviting the group to prayerfully discern two leaders within this group (Acts 6:1-7; Luke 9:1-2, 10:1-2) that will accept the opportunity to organize and launch a new DLT Group guiding them first through DLT Boot Camp. Ideally, each group will continue to meet monthly (post DLT Boot Camp) taking Summer breaks reconvening in the Fall, while utilizing some of the concepts learned in the DLT Boot Camp intensive (Day 1 of week 3).
- 10 minutes Q&A regarding personal insights (Day 1 of week 3).
- 10 minutes to collect journals (Day 1 of week 3).

Day 2

- 30 minutes Early Morning Prayer Microsoft Teams/Call one-day per week (Day 2 of week 3).
- 30 minutes Devotional/Bible Lesson with prompts and assignments for next week. Topic of Study: *4 Chair Discipling: Chapter Three — Our Mission and Motive (p.33).* (Day 2 of week 3).
- 60 minutes Participant #1 & Participant #2 leads prayer and/or devotional week three with pre-assigned pericope.

Week 4: July 28, 2024 — Module Three: DLT Basic Mission Training (Serving together)

Day 1

- 15 minutes Retreat (JOF Church Campus) & Mission Project Preparation: Group will be asked to contribute towards expenses for the purchase of breakfast and lunch items for the on-campus retreat at Journey of Faith as a precursor to attending our mission project opportunity. Group members will gather for a one-day retreat for problem solving challenges ie: grocery shopping together, cooking together, cleaning together, etc. The Pastor will identify a local mission project/opportunity for the group to serve at together. Participants will seize this

opportunity to model the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in service alongside community members! (Day 1 of week 4)

- 25 minutes Who's Your Neighbor Weekly Check-in: top of each week (Day 1 of week 4).
- 10 minutes Q&A regarding personal insights (Day 1 of week 4).
- 10 minutes to collect journals (Day 1 of week 4).

Day 2

- 30 minutes Early Morning Prayer Microsoft Teams/Call one-day per week (Day 2 of week 4).
- 30 minutes Devotional/Bible Lesson with prompts and assignments for next week. Topic of Study: *4 Chair Discipling: Chapter Four — The Method — an Overview (p.41).* (Day 2 of week 4).
- 60 minutes Participant #2 & Participant #3 leads prayer and/or devotional week four with pre-assigned pericope.

Day 3

- 2 hours Outing: Group pre-planned fellowship outing. (Friday or Saturday of the week). (Day 3 of week 4)

Week 5: August 04, 2024 — Module Four: DLT Basic Collaboration Training (Retreat together)

Day 1

- 40 minutes Who's Your Neighbor Weekly Check-in: top of each week (Day 1 of the week 5).
- 10 minutes Q&A regarding personal insights (Day 1 of the week 5).
- 10 minutes to collect journals (Day 1 of the week 5).

Day 2

- 30 minutes Early Morning Prayer Microsoft Teams/Call one-day per week (Day 2 of the week 5).
- 30 minutes Devotional/Bible Lesson with prompts and assignments for next week. Topic of Study: *4 Chair Discipling: Chapter Five — Chair 1: The Lost (p.53).* (Day 2 of the week 5).
- 60 minutes Participant #3 and Participant #4 lead final prayer and/or devotional week five.

Day 3

- 10–12-hour Retreat (JOF Church Campus) & Mission Project: Group will be asked to contribute towards expenses for the purchase of breakfast and lunch items for the on-campus retreat at Journey of Faith as a precursor to attending our mission project opportunity. Group members will gather for a one-day retreat for problem solving challenges ie: grocery shopping together, cooking together, cleaning together, etc. Participants will seize this opportunity to model the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in service alongside community members (Friday and/or Saturday of the week)! (Day 3 of week 5)

Week 6: August 11, 2024 — Doing Life Together Final Assessments

- 15-20 minutes Conduct one on one final interviews with each participant.
- 10 minutes Administer Post-Discipleship Fitness Assessment Surveys to assess each group members discipleship stage.
- Determine impact of weekly group check-ins and reflections by compiling journal notes from each week.
- Group Leader will give a final charge to the participants to lead a “Doing Life Together” Group.
- Two Pairs of Fishers: In week six the group leader(s) will present the two fishers that have accepted the opportunity to continue walking with this DLT Group. In addition, the group will submit two additional leaders for the opportunity to organize and launch a new DLT Group guiding them first through DLT Boot Camp.

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